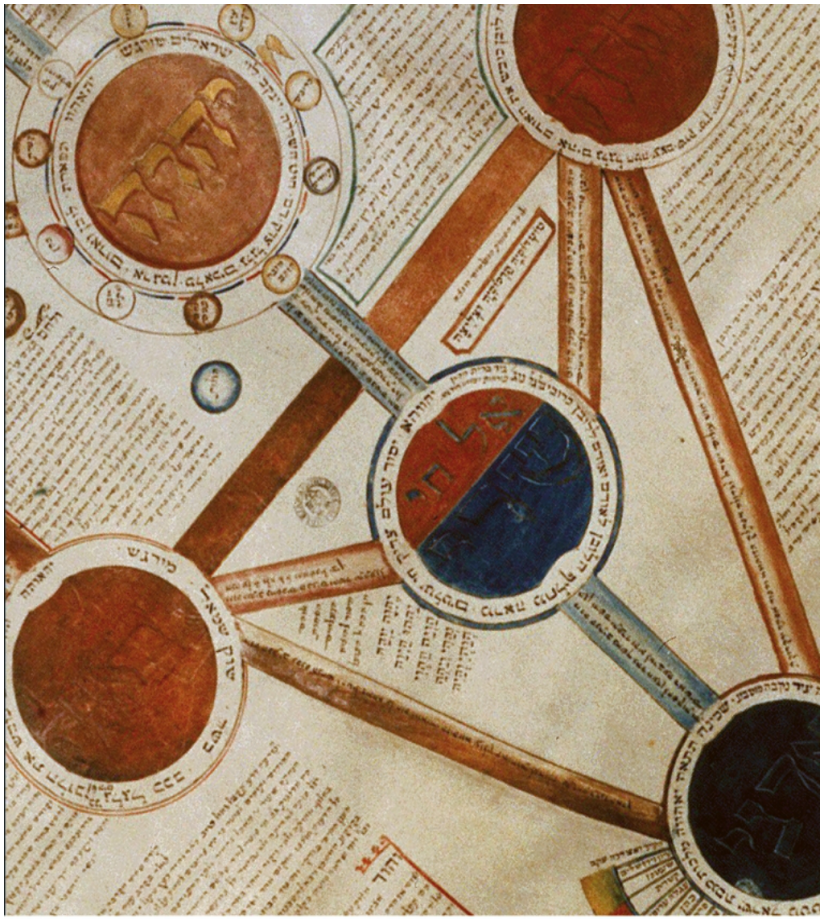

PENGUIN CLASSICS

The Kabbalistic Tradition

Translated and edited with notes by ALAN UNTERMAN

PENGUIN CLASSICS

THE KABBALISTIC TRADITION

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The Kabbalistic Tradition

An Anthology of Jewish Mysticism

Edited and translated with an Introduction and Notes by ALAN UNTERMAN

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Preface

There is a Mishnaic teaching, ascribed to a second-century Palestinian sage Simeon ben Zoma: 'Who is truly wise? He who continues to learn from every person' (*Avot* 4:1). This is somewhat problematic since, as Rabbi Chaim Vital points out, what we have here is surely the definition of an able student, not of a truly wise person. Vital resolves this by explaining that all Israelites have a letter of the Bible which is their personal dimension of divine revelation. In order to understand what God is saying in Holy Scripture a complete picture is needed, and this can be done by assimilating other people's insights and combining them with one's own.

The implication of all this is that wisdom is an ongoing process not a state, a journey rather than a destination. We can perhaps extend Vital's explanation to include everyone in this teaching, in line with the universal scope of the original Mishnaic statement about learning from 'every person'.

I am grateful for what I have gained from my own spiritual guides and academic teachers and from my colleagues, clerical and lay, Jews and Gentiles. I am particularly grateful to Lindeth Vasey, my Penguin Books copy-editor, who by raising objections and queries helped me to clarify things I thought I knew.

More than from my teachers and from my colleagues I have learnt from those I sought to teach. This is true of my students particularly at the University of Manchester and of my congregants, the men, women and children of the Yeshurun Synagogue, Gatley. For the past twenty-six years the Gatley Yeshurunites, through their response and criticism, and through sharing their religious insights with me, taught me while I sought to teach them. It is to the Yeshurun community that I dedicate this work.

Introduction

THE NATURE OF JEWISH MYSTICISM

'Kabbalah', also known as 'the Secret Wisdom', is a term loosely used by Jews to refer to the various traditions of Jewish mysticism down the ages. It is more specifically associated with the mysticism of the Zohar in medieval Spain. 'Kabbalah' may be spelt 'Qabbalah' or 'Cabbalah' - a Hebrew word which means 'that which has been received'; it has the implication of someone receiving their mystical teaching directly from an enlightened master. Most Jewish mystics seem to have had such masters from the living and the dead. A popular teacher of Kabbalah of the latter kind was the prophet Elijah, who was taken up alive into heaven (2 Kings 2:11) and serves as God's messenger to mankind in each age. It is believed that secret teachings are brought to earth by Elijah, who appears in various guises to human beings.

Were Kabbalah merely the passing on of mystical teachings from master to disciple one would expect little change, over time, in the nature of Kabbalistic ideas. The opposite is actually the case, and alongside evolutionary developments in its ideas there have been revolutions in Kabbalistic thought. These were supported by the claim that they originated either with heavenly masters, or with hidden earthly ones, or with newly discovered ancient texts, unknown to previous Kabbalists. One influential modern Kabbalist, Rabbi Yehudah Leb Halevi Ashlag (1886-1955) says about his own master:

> My holy master… was well known throughout the city as a trustworthy merchant. Nobody, however, has recognized his achievements in the wisdom of the Kabbalah until this day, nor was I given permission to reveal his name. (From a letter quoted by his son in a preface to Ashlag's *Sulam* commentary on the Zohar)

Because these claims could not easily be authenticated considerable

freedom was provided to Jewish mystics to develop new insights. No doubt they genuinely believed that their original innovations were really 'old-new' teachings, and the true meaning of what was previously taught.

Change and novelty are accommodated by Kabbalists on the assumption that new breakthroughs in Kabbalah depend on the receptivity of those able to accept such mystical teachings. The teachings are ancient but they can only be received when people are ready. Rabbi Ashlag in the introduction to the *Sulam*, his Lurianic commentary on the Zohar, explains why the Zohar was unknown to earlier generations before the late thirteenth century, why the Lurianic exposition of the Zohar was unknown before the sixteenth century and why a correct interpretation of Lurianic teaching was unknown before the twentieth century. His answer is couched in terms of the need for the completion of the vessels that would convey the divine light and the subsequent revelation of this light to generations that would be able to absorb it.

Followers of Kabbalah view the teachings of the mystical path as the true inner meaning of the Jewish religion itself, handed down as an esoteric tradition. Its authority comes not merely from the charisma of a particular Kabbalistic mystic, but also from the great sages of the past, whose ideals and insights inspired him.

While academic scholars take an historical interest in Kabbalistic texts, seeking to discover when they were written, who their authors were and what influences shaped their particular teachings, Kabbalists are not really interested in all this. They simply accept the different elements within Kabbalah as either genuine ancient teachings, or as later, authentic interpretations of such teachings. If a mystical work is recognized as an authoritative work of spiritual insight, as the Zohar is, then whether it was an eyewitness account of the proceedings of a group of mystics in a particular era, or was written by mystics more than a thousand years later, its mystical authority is not in doubt.

ORIGINS OF JEWISH MYSTICISM

The Bible

It is unknown when Jewish mystical traditions began. Although the Bible is full of communications between God and man – revelation and prophecy, visions and heavenly journeys – there seem to be essential differences between mysticism and prophecy. Prophets are called by God while mystics undertake techniques to come into contact with the divine, or to understand the mysteries of the divine world.

The fact is, however, that we do not know a great deal about certain aspects of biblical religion, except what is explicit in the texts themselves. So it is possible that elements of later Jewish mysticism do indeed have their roots in the Hebrew Bible. For example, the Bible tells of groups of prophets who engaged in ecstatic prophesying, but we know little about this ecstasy, or about techniques for bringing it about, apart perhaps from the use of music. The prophet Samuel, having anointed Saul as King of Israel, says to him:

> When you come there to the city, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the hill-top shrine being led by a lute, a tambourine, a pipe and a lyre; and they will be prophesying [ecstatically]. And the spirit of the Lord will inspire you, and you will prophesy [ecstatically] with them, and be turned into another man. (1 Samuel 10:5–6)

Kabbalists invariably read texts from the past as if they contained their own ideas and practices, so for them the Bible is alive with the mystical insights of later generations. They justify this anachronistic attitude by claiming that what is hidden behind a text is an essential part of its meaning. Since mystical teachings are transmitted orally, texts need deciphering in the light of any accompanying oral traditions.

Merkabah Mysticism

The earliest Jewish mystics of whom we have any written records are called Merkabah ('Chariot') mystics. The origin of the name is not known, but it is associated with the heavenly vision of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1). Merkabah mystics are described as those who 'descend in the chariot' (*yordei merkabah*), and this form of mysticism is known as Maaseh Merkabah.

These Merkabah mystics flourished in the first few centuries of the Common Era (CE) in Palestine and Babylonia, and developed exercises and meditations to enable the mystic to ascend (or 'descend'), on his spiritual journey, through a series of halls and heavens that separate man from God. Such exercises were strenuous and not meant for ordinary people. At the end of their journey Merkabah mystics were granted a vision of God 'sitting on His throne in heaven', and when they returned to normal consciousness, they brought back the gift of magical and miraculous powers.

The Merkabah mystics seemed to believe that God could not be found in the here and now of the mundane world, but primarily in heaven. Perhaps God had abandoned the world, and withdrawn to heaven, following the trauma of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. Their image of God was of a holy, transcendent Being. It was therefore necessary to leave the mundane world behind, in order to rise to a higher spiritual level and find God.

Some of the ideas of the Merkabah mystics have survived in a series of texts, known as *Heikhalot* texts, which describe the way through the heavenly halls, the meditative techniques undertaken by the mystics and the effects of this journey on the mystic.

Sefer Yetzirah

One of the works of the period of the Merkabah mystics is the Sefer Yetzirah, the 'Book of Formation', which is the earliest Hebrew work that outlines the way the world has been created by God. This short work belongs to the tradition of Creation Mysticism (*Maaseh Bereshit*), which was more interested in the mystical nature of the world and of God than the manuals of the Merkabah mystics.

The Sefer Yetzirah outlines the thirty-two mysterious paths of wisdom out of which the world is constituted. These are made up from the Ten *Sefirot* and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet; the latter are the foundations of all creation, constituting reality. The Sefer Yetzirah became a handbook for 'white' magic in the Talmudic* period. Use was made of the combination of letters, referred to in it as the heart of the creative process, for magical transformation of things. It was even used in the creation of a golem, or artificial man.

The Sefer Yetzirah was composed during the second or third

centuries CE, in the same circles that produced Merkabah literature. The work is very ambiguous and has provoked much commentary. Some Kabbalists ascribed it to the biblical Patriarch Abraham, while others maintained it was written by the second-century Palestinian sage Rabbi Akiva, based on traditions going back to Abraham.

Rabbinic literature mentions the Sefer Yetzirah and also has a series of accounts of the experiences of Merkabah mystics. Particularly significant is the warning in the Mishnah, the first official text of Rabbinic Judaism, not to expound Creation Mysticism to two students at the same time, and not to expound Merkabah Mysticism even to one student on his own, unless he is wise enough to understand things by himself (*Mishnah Chagigah* 2:1).

Sefer Ha-Bahir

In the post-Talmudic period there is little information about the development of Jewish mysticism. One short work, however, points ahead to major developments of Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. This was Sefer Ha-Bahir, from the eleventh or twelfth centuries in its current form, the original of which Kabbalistic tradition ascribed to a first-century Palestinian sage Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah. It was first printed in Amsterdam in 1651.

Kabbalists explained that all of the Rabbinic writings are really based on the secrets of the Torah. However, these secrets are hidden within the text and are not apparent to those who study them. Nechunya ben Hakanah was the first to compose a Rabbinic work where the secrets were explicit. The attitude of the Bahir is that if one removes oneself from this-worldly things and contemplates mystical teaching, it is as if one were praying all day.

The Bahir expands the doctrine of the *Sefirot* and their role in the creation of the world, using a variety of expressions for them. It interprets biblical verses in mystical terms, and explains how rituals have cosmic significance, affecting the divine realm. The Bahir also refers to the use of holy names in magical practices. It is the first Jewish mystical text to promote the doctrine of transmigration of souls, which it uses as an explanation of why righteous people seem to suffer in this world and wicked people seem to prosper: the former have sinned in a past life, while the latter have merits from

a previous incarnation.

The Merkabah texts, the Sefer Yetzirah and the Sefer Ha-Bahir all had considerable influence on the German Pietist Movement (Chasidei Ashkenaz) of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This was an ethical and mystical movement which left its mark on the beliefs, rituals and liturgy of Ashkenazi Jewry. The main development of Kabbalah, however, took place in Spain.

KABBALISTIC MYSTICISM

The Zohar

In the centuries following the flourishing of Merkabah mysticism and the Sefer Ha-Bahir, there were various new responses to the mystical search for God. The most influential sought an understanding of the different ways in which the divine is present, albeit in a hidden way, within the world itself, and devised new methods of bridging the human–divine gap.

Attempts were made to crack the codes underlying the seemingly profane world and to read the Bible text in a new way. The Spanish mystics wished to understand how the Jewish religion itself and its practices were means for seeking out the immanent, but hidden God. This type of mysticism, a theosophical reflection on the nature of the divine and on the secret meaning of Judaism, is characteristic of the Zohar, the main text of Kabbalah. The Sefer HaZohar ('Book of Splendour') and works of a similar nature, such as the Tikkunei Zohar, were produced in Spain in the late thirteenth century by a fellowship of mystics associated with Moses de Leon (1240–1305).

Although the transcendence of God is emphasized in the idea that the Infinite Godhead (*Ein Sof*) is completely unknowable, the world also partakes of the divine because it is structured out of divine emanation, through the Ten *Sefirot*. The *Sefirot* may be understood as different vessels which give shape to the divine light, the flow of divine energy, which produced and sustains the world. They were even seen as aspects of God Himself, viewed from a human perspective.

Zoharic literature conveys a sense of God's omnipresence and

immanence. This is close to pantheism, the belief that everything is God, and has been called 'pan-en-theism': 'everything is in God'. For some of the Zoharic mystics everything is a reflection of the upper worlds. As in the Sefer Yetzirah, man himself is a microcosm, the divinely structured universe in miniature. God is hidden everywhere in the mundane world and the whole universe partakes of the divine.

Kabbalah, implicit in the Sefer Ha-Bahir, really only becomes a fully developed mystical system with the Zohar, which is a text like no other that preceded it. Zoharic literature brought together many of the themes of Jewish mysticism up to the end of the thirteenth century.

The main body of the Zohar, whose form is a meandering Aramaic commentary on the Pentateuch and certain other biblical books, was 'published' by Moses de Leon, who sent copies of the text to his colleagues. He told them that he was copying an ancient manuscript, which had been composed in the second century CE, about the exploits and teachings of the Palestinian sage Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. We do not know whether his colleagues actually believed that de Leon had such an ancient manuscript, or whether they accepted that he had simply composed a powerful, and in many ways unique, mystical text himself and had chosen second-century Palestine as a setting for his writing.

Modern scholars believe that Moses de Leon was the actual author of the Zohar, and that he and members of his mystical fellowship composed the other sections that comprise Zoharic literature. This view is based on a careful study of the language, mostly a literary Aramaic which may never have actually been spoken, of the setting which reflects thirteenth-century Spain rather than second-century Palestine, and of some of the ideas which seem to be the culmination of mystical writings up to de Leon's time. We also have an account from a younger contemporary of de Leon's, Isaac of Acre, who heard of an attempt to obtain the original manuscript from his widow shortly after his death. She denied its existence and claimed that her husband had written it himself.

Kabbalists utterly reject this scholarly estimate of the work. The power and authenticity of the Zohar convinces them that it must have come from someone of the status of Simeon bar Yochai, a great sage who is said to have spent thirteen years hiding in a cave

with his son and being instructed by Elijah the prophet.

Rabbi Ashlag, in his introduction to the *Sulam*, says that if the Zohar's author were shown to be Moses de Leon he would have to value this Kabbalist more than any of the great sages of the Mishnaic period, including bar Yochai himself. In fact Ashlag could not accept its ascription to de Leon, since the wisdom of the Zohar indicates that it could be by one of the prophets, or even by Moses. For Ashlag the Zohar was at least composed by someone of the status of the Mishnaic sage Simeon bar Yochai. Of course, given the Kabbalistic belief in the transmigration of souls, these conflicting views can be reconciled if de Leon was a reincarnation of some aspect of the soul of bar Yochai. Ultimately, however, bar Yochai himself was merely a conduit for secret teachings which were part of the divine revelation to the ancients.

Once the Zohar spread to wider circles it became the point of reference for all further mystical development. Its mythological language is highly anthropomorphic, and much richer in images and symbols than anything preceding it. It firmly established the doctrine of the Ten *Sefirot*, using a variety of terms for them, as the accepted way for mystics to conceive of God. The Zohar spread the belief in reincarnation (*gilgul*), and affirmed the masculine and feminine dimension of all things, including God Himself. It also emphasized the reality of evil, and put the idea of a world literally emanating from God at the heart of Kabbalah.

Lurianic Kabbalah

The dominance of the Zohar, with its emphasis on divine immanence, lasted for several centuries. It was eventually superseded by Lurianic Kabbalah, which set a new agenda from the late sixteenth century onwards. After a struggle to be accepted as the authentic voice of Jewish mysticism, it eclipsed the Zohar and influenced all subsequent Jewish mystical enterprises.

Unlike the Zohar which was the product of a fellowship of mystics, Lurianic Kabbalah originated with one man, Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534–72). He only taught his version of Kabbalah during the last two years of his life after he arrived in Safed, in the Galilee region of Palestine. Safed was a centre of Kabbalah, and was populated by a group of mystics of Iberian origin whose parents had

been exiled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century.

Before arriving there Luria had spent seven years meditating on an island in the Nile in Egypt, where he studied the Zohar and developed his new interpretation of Kabbalah. It is not clear who his human teachers were, but legends tell of how he came into possession of unknown manuscript texts of Kabbalah. They also say that Elijah appeared to him, that the Holy Spirit rested upon him and that he ascended to the heavenly academy to learn from the souls of departed sages and mystics. Later generations believed that Luria's soul was indeed a reincarnation of the soul of Simeon bar Yochai, the spiritual hero of the Zohar.

After arriving in Safed, Luria gathered around himself a group of gifted disciples, whom he instructed orally, teaching them his original Kabbalistic views. His custom was to go out into the fields with his followers on a Friday afternoon, dressed in white, to welcome the Sabbath bride identified with the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*), the feminine aspect of God, and to chant Kabbalistic hymns.

He also led his disciples in new practices of an ascetic nature, some of which were messianically inspired. Luria's Kabbalah was originally meant for an elite group of mystics, but after his death his teachings began to spread rapidly.

Chaim Vital, Luria's main disciple, only studied with him for a short time, yet he wrote extensively about his teachings. Kabbalists explain that Luria gave Vital magical water from the well of the prophetess Miriam to drink, and this attuned Vital's soul to absorb Luria's teaching. Other disciples made their own notes of Luria's teachings which they published in versions differing from that of Vital. When Luria was asked why he did not write down any of his own Kabbalistic ideas himself, he replied that he was simply unable to do so because as soon as he began to expound them the 'fountains of wisdom' opened up and overflowed.

According to some legends the Rabbinic authorities tried to prevent Luria from teaching Kabbalah publicly, until Elijah appeared to them and persuaded them not to object. Once when Luria was asleep a disciple saw his lips moving, so he bent over him to try to hear what he was saying. Luria awoke and explained that he had been waiting several years for that teaching from heaven,

which he had been reciting in a trance state, and it had now been interrupted and lost.

Lurianic Kabbalah introduced and enhanced a series of new Kabbalistic ideas. At its core was the idea of the self-contraction (*tzimtzum*) of the Infinite Godhead (*Ein Sof*), who had withdrawn so as to leave a vacant dimension into which the world could be created.

During the creative process, which took place in this vacant dimension, the vessels holding the divine light broke (*shevirat ha-kelim*), and some holy Sparks (*Nitzotzot*) of the divine became entrapped in the broken Shells (*Kelippot*) of the vessels originally meant to hold them.

This fractured world needs rectification (*tikkun*), and it is man's task to free (*berur*) the holy Sparks from their entrapment in the broken Shells. This can only be done by means of Kabbalistically inspired Jewish religious activity. The culmination of all these acts of rectification will be the advent of Messianic redemption.

The Zohar had taken evil very seriously, not attempting to explain it away as the mere absence of good. Evil exists as a whole structure, mythologically depicted under the sway of Samael, the Prince of Demons, and his consort Lilith. This problem of how evil can come to exist in a world created by a good God was variously dealt with in Lurianic Kabbalah. One response was that evil is a by-product of the creative process, of the self-limitation of God. It is the dross which inevitably emerges from the refining process, and without it no finite world could come into being. A more radical thesis exists in some Lurianic works where evil represents actual forces within God that are resistant to the creative process and had to be jettisoned so that a world could come into being. This means there is an ongoing confrontation between evil and the dimension of the holy in the mundane world.

Ultimate redemption can only come about when the Jew performs rituals with the correct mystical mindset. This removes the Sparks of holiness from their exile among the Shells. Once this process is complete the Shells are bereft of power, since they have no life of their own, and the Messianic Age will dawn. There is an aspect of exile in God Himself, in His self-contraction and withdrawal, and also in the entrapment of the Sparks of the divine

light within the evil dimension of the Shells of the broken vessels. This emphasis on exile spoke to a ready audience of those who were living in the shadow of exile, after the expulsions from the Iberian peninsula.

Lurianic Kabbalah embraced the immanence of God, whose light fills all worlds, yet it gave a new importance to the transcendence of God whose essence surrounds all worlds, having withdrawn in the cosmic act of *tzimtzum*.

Antinomian Messianism

The approach of Lurianic Kabbalah to the role which individuals play in bringing about the era of the Messiah led to a crisis in the seventeenth century in the form of a Messianic movement which grew up around a young Kabbalist Shabbetai Tzvi (1626–76), who lived in the Ottoman Empire. Shabbetai was proclaimed the Messiah, and the news spread throughout the Jewish world. Many of his supporters were eminent Kabbalists and scholars, yet this mystically inspired Messianism also led to an upsurge in popular enthusiasm. Ordinary folk began to see visions, to prophesy and to speak in tongues. The opposition to Shabbetai increased greatly when he was forcibly converted to Islam in 1666, although believers in him interpreted this as an aspect of the process of *tikkun*, redeeming the holy Sparks trapped within Islam.

Freedom from the constraints of Jewish law (*halakhah*) was characteristic of many of the surviving Shabbatean groups. These were led by charismatic Kabbalists, some of whom claimed to be Messianic figures or even divine incarnations. They were severely condemned by the Rabbinic establishment, who tried to limit the unbridled use of Kabbalah and of Messianism. The Shabbatean Movement brought home to its critics the dangers inherent in Kabbalah, which set up its own basis of authority in the inspiration which individuals claimed came directly from a heavenly source.

Chasidic Mysticism

The post-Shabbatean period was one of chaos for followers of Kabbalah, since many were suspected of Shabbatean sympathies.

This was the fate of the Chasidic Movement, founded by Israel ben Eliezer Baal Shem Tov (1700-60), known by an acronym of his title as 'the Besht'. His teachings were developed and spread by his followers among the Jews of the Ukraine, Poland and White Russia. Although we know more about the Chasidic Movement than about any of the mystical movements in Judaism that preceded it, detailed knowledge of the life and times of the Besht are surrounded by the legends that his followers told about him long after his death.

Like Luria the Besht wrote little and yet was able to inspire a generation of disciples who interpreted his teachings in a variety of different ways. He based his teachings on the Zohar and the Lurianic corpus, but legend tells that he too had access to handwritten anonymous Kabbalistic texts. His earthly teachers in Kabbalah are unknown but he was instructed from the other world by the biblical prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, who himself was the teacher of Elijah according to the Rabbinic view.

The Besht and his disciples used all the rich imagery of the Zohar and the Lurianic tradition, but rejected the extreme asceticism associated with Luria's teaching. Their emphasis was on the immanence of God, hiding within the world. At the core was the idea that if God is indeed everywhere, then He can always be found, and there is nowhere that man can hide from Him, no area which is ultimately profane rather than holy. Man's devotion to God, known as cleaving to God *(devekut),* takes place not only in following religious precepts but in all walks of life. The highest point of this devotion involves the act of unifying God, bringing together the lower and upper world, and fostering unity of the masculine and feminine elements within the divine and human worlds.

Much of Chasidic teaching was oral, delivered by Chasidic masters at gatherings of disciples and edited afterwards by devoted followers. It thus often takes the form of extended sermons. Some of the literature was penned by Chasidic scholars interweaving Kabbalistic and *halakhic* themes. The wider Chasidic community told stories about their wonder-working rabbis (known as 'Rebbes'), which were collected in hagiographical anthologies. It was through these stories, and the messages they contained, that Chasidic teaching was conveyed to the masses.

In its origins Chasidism was something of a rebel movement, and

its adherents were ostracized by other East European Jews, Kabbalists and non-Kabbalists alike. It was criticized by the religious establishment, and suspected of being a renewal of Shabbateanism. This was because there were similarities between the two groups, particularly in the Chasidic belief in great-souled men, the Chasidic Rebbe or *Tzaddik*, who act as intermediaries between man and God.

Chasidic emphasis on the immanence of God clashed with the rigid structures of Jewish religion, where there is a clear separation between the holy and the profane. In the pre-Chasidic period Lurianic Kabbalah, particularly its Messianism, had sometimes led mystics away from the norms of Rabbinic Judaism. There was a danger that serving God through everyday activities would have the same effects, since Chasidism promoted serving God in joy, through pipe smoking, alcohol, dancing and singing. Its masters replied that since God could be found everywhere, therefore He could be served in every way. The saying found in the Tikkunei Zohar, 'There is no place empty of Him' (*Tikkun* 70:122b), was widely quoted in Chasidic writings. God may have withdrawn from the world in the act of *tzimtzum*, but that withdrawal was not God's absence, rather it was God hiding within the world. The very thoughts of man partake of the divine, so for the early Chasidic masters strange thoughts of lust and covetousness could be raised back to God. Wherever one is there God is, and one can attach oneself to Him. The light of the Infinite Godhead shines even in the darkest abyss, and the life force of God is to be found in the Shells themselves.

For the Zohar, Lurianic Kabbalah and Chasidism a balance had to be maintained between the experience of divine transcendence and of the immanence of God. Although the belief that true service of God cannot be limited by laws is found among some Chasidic thinkers, the movement maintained a respectful attitude to the *halakhah*. It eventually became a central part of the Orthodox establishment, and helped preserve both traditional Judaism and the continuity of Jewish mysticism in the age of Enlightenment rationalism.

MODERN TIMES

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Jewish Enlightenment swept through Jewish communities in Central Europe, many Jews reinterpreted their Judaism in a non-mystical way. This was particularly true of Reformers, but even some Orthodox thinkers, who sought to recreate Judaism in a modern image, avoided any reference to Kabbalah. They regarded it as a cumbersome dimension of the religion, too close to superstition, and referred to it as 'magical mechanism' (Samson Raphael Hirsch, '*The Nineteen Letters on Judaism*', Eighteenth Letter, p. 122).

The situation began to change in the latter part of the twentieth century when, partly through the enthusiastic work of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965), people rediscovered the romance of the Chasidic outlook. The academic rediscovery of Kabbalah also took place around this time after Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, expounded the message of the Zohar and of Lurianic Kabbalah in a scholarly context, not only making Kabbalah academically respectable, but making it intellectually comprehensible to the non-mystic.

Today Jewish mysticism has begun to find its rightful place in the hearts and minds of many Jews and Gentiles. Contemporary interest is in line with the New Age recognition of the limits of rationality, and disenchantment with traditional religions. There has also been a renewed interest in the occult which has led to a positive evaluation of Kabbalah. Its universal elements have been found attractive by Jews and non-Jews, and it is currently studied and esteemed even outside of the framework of Jewish religion.

Kabbalah has also attracted the interest of women who, paradoxically given the emphasis on the feminine side of God in Kabbalah, made little contribution to the Jewish mystical tradition in the past. Among the few records we have of female mystics are those of women speaking in tongues, prophesying ecstatically and even leading sectarian groups during the Shabbatean Movement and its aftermath. The position of women as wives and mothers, in a patriarchal society, partly explains their absence from any roles as Kabbalists. They were not encouraged to engage in the profound study of Judaism, let alone Kabbalah, and male Kabbalists were not able to maintain close contact with them as students.

There are few accounts of exceptional women engaging in

Kabbalistic studies. One consists of legends about a female Chasidic leader Hannah Rachel Werbemacher (1805–92), who was known as the Maid of Ludmir. She claimed that she was granted a new and higher soul, and taught her followers in the Ukraine from behind a modest barrier separating her from her male disciples. When she was persuaded that she should marry, it seems her public teaching role ended. Unfortunately none of her Kabbalistic teachings has survived.

Traditional Kabbalists, who are generally very conservative, regard modern interest in Kabbalah with suspicion. The classical texts focus on the almost exclusive role of Israel in the redemptive process, and any universal elements are set in a highly exclusive framework. Involvement with Kabbalah was considered dangerous in the past, and it is not considered a subject for Jewish, or non-Jewish, dilettantes, or for women, today. In the Middle Ages the study of Kabbalah was discouraged till a man reached the age of forty, which in Jewish terms is the age of understanding. It was also not supposed to be taught to someone who was not yet married, and to those who had not 'filled their stomach with the bread and wine' of Jewish religious teaching (*Shulchan Arukh* YD 246:5). Despite these caveats some Chasidic and non-Chasidic groups today do believe in the active promotion of Kabbalistic teaching to everyone. One branch of the followers of Rabbi Ashlag, calling itself 'The Kabbalah Centre' and led by Rabbi Philip Berg, has set up Kabbalah Centres throughout the world, for Jews and Gentiles alike, attracting famous people. Berg, however, has not won the support of more traditional followers of Ashlag or of the religious establishment. The teachings of his 'Kabbalah Centre' have been condemned as more cult than Kabbalah.

The Chabad/Lubavitch Chasidic subgroup teaches its version of Kabbalah to young and old. This practice has been somewhat controversial but has been eclipsed by condemnation of Chabad for its recent Messianism. Some Chabad adherents believe that their previous Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1902– 94), will come back from the dead as the Messiah. A minority of them even believe that the Rebbe never really died but went into hiding, or that he was an incarnation, in purely Kabbalistic terms, of aspects of the divine. These claims have been criticized as negating Jewish teaching.

Certain religious Zionist groups believe that the return of the Jews to the Promised Land is itself the expression of the advent of the Messianic Age, an ideology strongly associated with the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the land of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), who was a gifted Kabbalist. Messianic Zionism has not, as yet, focused on any individual figure, but merely on the dawning of a new Messianic Age.

Kabbalah itself is a very controversial subject, with considerable opposition both to its teachings and its methods. It emphasizes the feminine as well as the masculine aspects of God, uses a powerful sexual imagery in depicting divine harmony, portrays the reality of evil in overly mythological terms, promotes passionate Messianism and is committed to the belief in the transmigration of souls. All of these are highly contentious ideas, rejected by many outside mystic circles.

CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

In this book I have selected material which shows something of the breadth of Kabbalistic interest, although there is little on Practical Kabbalah, which involves magical remedies.

I have concentrated on the three main areas of Kabbalistic creativity: the literature of the Zohar, the Lurianic corpus as expressed by Chaim Vital and parts of the Chasidic mystical tradition.

There are brief introductions to each selection with its source and explaining its theme, as well as notes and fuller material in the Glossary and Select Biographies.

All the translations from the Bible, Rabbinic and Kabbalistic literature are my own. I have tried to make the texts as self-explanatory as possible, given the context, and thus have only included passages that make sense in English translation. Unfortunately many mystical texts are too obscure to be translated. Jews who recite Kabbalistic texts often do not really understand them, but merely chant them as a holy act. There is a poetic and meditational quality, as well as a rhythmic power, in chanting an Aramaic Kabbalah text which is lost in an English version.

To be a genuine Kabbalist one needs a natural mystical intuition, commitment to Jewish culture, immersion in Kabbalistic practices, annihilation of lusts and egoism, and, except for great-souled individuals, a human teacher to guide one. To apply some of the insights of Kabbalah in one's religious life, however, is a far less demanding task.

It was stated that for a house merely to have a copy of the Zohar, or of Nachman of Breslav's Likkutei Moharan, on its bookshelf meant that its inhabitants were participating in the Kabbalistic redemptive enterprise. Some of the popular anthologies of Kabbalistic teachings, from which I have included selections, were meant for ordinary Jews to contemplate. They continue to exert considerable influence on the spiritual consciousness of Jews in everyday life, as a form of what we may call 'Kabbalah lite'.

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CHAPTER 1
GOD

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

These selections reflect the struggle of some Kabbalists to avoid the rather literal and mythological implications of the use of language by the mystics. People are misled by sins, for treating God in idolatrous terms is not merely a mistake of consciousness, but a cardinal sin. Some mystics rejected the over-allegorical interpretation of mystical language because even rather crude expressions about God were true, and not arbitrary. The argument is an old one, most pronounced in the disagreement between the philosopher Moses Maimonides and his critic the mystic Rabbi Abraham ben David (1125–98, known as the Rabad). Maimonides wrote:

> *The following are called heretics.… Those who say there is one God but that He has a body and a physical likeness.*

To which the Rabbi Abraham commented:

> *Why does he call such people heretics? For a number of people who were greater and better than he adopted this thought according to what they saw in Scriptural verses, and more than that from what they saw in the words of the* Aggadah *which can confuse the mind. ('Yad', Teshuvah 3:7)*

For Maimonides, Aggadah *and other words and persons specific to the Kabbalah, see Glossary and Select Biographies.*

Anthropomorphism and *Sefirot*

'Etz Chaim', shaar 4, anaf 1, by Chaim Vital

This extract by Isaac Luria's leading disciple from the main corpus of Lurianic writing takes an unambiguous view of Kabbalistic imagery as merely symbolic.

You already know that we do not have the ability to involve ourselves in thinking about what existed before the emanation of the Ten *Sefirot*. We cannot use any images or forms at all, heaven forbid, except when to make matters intelligible we need to speak using parable and images. Therefore even if we speak of the existence of some form there in the supernal dimension, it is only for the sake of intelligibility.

Anthropomorphism and Isaac Luria

'Kanfei Yonah', Introduction, by Moses Jonah

Another passage from the school of Lurianic Kabbalah emphasizing the symbolic nature of Kabbalah's anthropomorphic descriptions.

Rabbi Isaac Luria warned his pupils:

> One should not be seduced by one's own sins to associate the celestial emanations with a physical nature. For above there is not, heaven forbid, anything material. We do not actually have permission to reflect on reality before the emanation of the world,[1] and we are not allowed to compare it in any way to known forms and images. We only speak in a parabolic manner to satisfy the needs of comprehension, but a wise person will understand by himself that this does not reflect an actual representation of divine reality.

5 Anthropomorphism According to Joseph Irgas

'Shomer Emunim', Second Argument, by Joseph Irgas

It was particularly the doctrine of tzimtzum *that caused problems with anthropomorphic language.*

Anyone who wants to understand the subject of Divine Contraction [*tzimtzum*] literally, is faced by several problems and contradictions affecting the main principles of faith.… This is because the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]* has no form and likeness. He does not have

surrounding circles, nor an empty space in the middle, nor a straight line inside. For this would make Him an object that could be represented, heaven forbid.… Apart from this it is surely the case that there is no place where He is not.[1] Infinitely above, to the very end of reality below and on all sides. If the Divine Contraction is taken literally, then there would be a place in which He was not, for behold in all of the vacant space only one line of light descended, as thin as a thread.… Similarly it is agreed among all Kabbalists that the Infinite Godhead is always in the same condition of existence without any change at all. Nothing can happen to Him, not even spiritual happenings and accidents.[2] Therefore one must say that the Divine Contraction is not meant literally.… The obvious truth is that it is a metaphor used to promote understanding.

Anthropomorphism and Symbols According to Joseph Irgas

'Hatzad Nachash' 22/23, by Joseph Irgas

In what follows there is a move beyond a metaphoric understanding of Kabbalistic symbols to the idea that they point beyond themselves.

With the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]* blessed be He, it is certainly not applicable to speak of Divine Contraction [*tzimtzum*] or ascent and descent, whether we find these teachings in the Zohar or in the writings of the Rabbi Isaac Luria [This is true] when they use material matters and physical events to describe emanated [spiritual] beings, how much more so [is it the case] when they describe higher things. The person who thinks about them should not believe that they are meant literally, heaven forbid, but a person needs to prepare his mind and direct it to the truth by removing the metaphoric features.

Anthropomorphism According to Ramchal

'Adir Bamarom', part 1, Mitzcha Degulgalta Rava Deravin, by Moshe Chaim Luzzato

A more philosophical denial of literalness is found in this eighteenth-

century passage from Luzzato, known as Ramchal, one of the greatest of Italian Kabbalists.

It is obvious that when we talk about the Emanator, may His name be blessed, we are only talking about His actions, not about His nature or essence at all. You should know that even when we mention Him under the name of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]*, there is no reference to His essence at all, only to His activities. The explanation of the matter is that since we know that the Emanator has emanated all that He has emanated, then the only thing we really know about Him is that He is a simple, basic light that illuminates. That illumination means His light reaches others. We have to understand, however, what this light is. We should not imagine that this is called a simple, basic light because we cannot speak about His nature at all. Rather you should know that He illuminates and we speak of His illumination and call this illumination the Infinite Godhead. For in truth It [this illumination] has no limits at all, just as there are no limits to the divine essence. … As His light so is His illumination, but neither of these deal with their very nature, but rather with their consequences. In truth His essence is elevated beyond any speech or words. We cannot even think about the consequences. For we can have no involvement with Him, we can only contemplate something of His illumination, which derives from Him.

Anthropomorphism and Literalness

'Yosher Levav', pp. 7–9, by Emanuel Chai Ricchi; also Ricchi's 'Mishnat Chasidim', Masechet Tzimtzum, *Ein Sof*, ch. 1

By contrast some mystics advocated a more literal understanding of Kabbalistic images, because these images negate the pantheism inherent in mystic speculation. This is particularly true about tzimtzum, *which expresses the transcendence of God who withdrew into Himself to allow 'space' for the world. Although this is a minority view, it was strongly held by some Kabbalists who opposed the allegorical interpretation of mystical images, as is apparent from the following two passages*.

A person who is careful about the honour of his Creator needs to take the idea of the Divine Contraction *[tzimtzum]* specifically in a

literal manner. He will thus avoid any blemish to God's honour in thinking that His essence is also to be found among lowly physical things, which are without honour and even despicable, heaven forbid. For without Divine Contraction everything would be God's essence.… I have no hesitation in responding to those who wish to show, in their investigation, that the Divine Contraction is not to be taken literally.… For I think, and this is not merely my own opinion but also according to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, may his memory be for a blessing,[1] that it is meant literally.… I rely on him in this accepted idea, and not simply on my investigations into the nature of the Divine Contraction. It also seems more satisfactory to me, however, to say that it is meant literally and that it is Divine Providence that precisely fills the place of the Divine Contraction. Rather if one maintains that it is not meant literally, one thus diminishes God's honour by saying that His essence is to be found among us even in places that are completely unsuitable for Him. It is not as great a lack of respect to say that the king looks out of the window at dirty matter, as if we say that the king himself is actually in the dirty matter.

Anthropomorphism, Literalness of *Tzimtzum*

'Mitpachat Soferim', p. 33, by Jacob Emden

Another literal interpretation of tzimtzum *is found in the following by a Kabbalist who on other occasions was critical of some Kabbalistic claims.*

It is impossible to picture the creation in any other way except that the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]* withdrew His infinite divine light from the middle to the sides. Any other way would be impossible, unless one wishes to turn everything upside down and consider the Creator as finite and the world as infinite. He cleared a place for the worlds and brought them into existence in His lap. He surrounds them on all sides and then opened for them a cylinder of effulgence of his light which emanates upon them. This is simple and understandable by itself.

THE INFINITE GODHEAD (*EIN SOF*)

Ein Sof According to Isaac Luria

'Etz Chaim', shaar 1, anaf 1

An explanation of the time sequence through which the mundane world comes into being from the Infinite Godhead.

We can undertake an investigation… related to the question, 'What is above? What is below? What is in front? And what is behind?' Because this question is very profound, it may well endanger a person who delves deeply into it. Concerning its subject matter our Sages have said in the Mishnah:

> Anyone who contemplates these four things it were fitting that they should not have come into the world. What is above? What is below? What is in front? And what is behind? Everyone who does not care for the honour of his Maker, it were fitting that he should not have come into the world.[1]

Therefore we cannot widen or deepen the issues in investigating them. We can, however, with the help of God explain matters briefly, like 'glancing through the lattice work',[2] without contemplating profound matters. Those who pay thoughtful attention to these our words will find a reasoned assessment of the matter if they understand the issue. Behold the subject of this investigation is the question of why the world was created at that particular time and not before or afterwards. Therefore you should know that the heavenly light, elevated beyond elevation without limitation, which is called the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]*, has a name that testifies that He cannot be grasped in any manner, either by thought or by deliberation. He is removed and separated from all thoughts and precedes all things emanated, created, formed and made. He does not have a temporal beginning or origin, for He is always in existence and persists for eternity. He has no commencement or end at all. Behold from the Infinite Godhead there came into being the great light that is called the Primordial Man [*Adam Kadmon*], preceding all emanated beings. Afterwards lights were emanated which depend upon Primordial Man.… There

are those which surround his body, aspects of the seven lower dimensions [*Sefirot*]… After that the Four Worlds: Emanation [*Atzilut*], Creation [*Beriah*], Formation [*Yetzirah*] and Action [*Asiyah*]… were emanated. The emanatory dimension of the Primordial Man, and how much more so of the other worlds below it did, however, have a commencement and an end,… which is not true of the Infinite Godhead. Behold from the period and time that the lights and the worlds began to spread forth and be emanated, from then all created beings came into existence one after another, until matters came to the situation as it is now. This was done according to the order of the spreading forth and emanation in a temporal sequence, one after the other. It would not have been possible to bring forward or to delay the creation of this world, for each world was created after the creation of the world above it. All the worlds were created, expanded, emanated and continued one below the other, at different and succeeding times until the time of the creation of this world was reached. This was then created in the time that was fitting for it, after the creation of the higher worlds above it.

Ein Sof and the Created World

'Chesed Le-avraham' 1:2, by Abraham Azulai

Ein Sof is depicted as behind all reality.

We have a fixed and indubitable belief that everything that flows is established, exists, is alive, etc., has its very being through the mystery of the light of the Infinite Godhead, may He be blessed. For it [this light] is in what is emanated, created, formed and made, both pure and impure. Even if we say that now the divine control of the world comes through a hidden light, and the *Sefirot* [1] are dried up in this Babylonian exile,[2] yet there is no light, small or great, or activity, little or large, which is not in existence through the light of the Infinite Godhead, which spreads from above down to the end of all levels. This is because there is no movement, trivial or great, which does not come from the illumination of the Infinite Godhead to all beings. The life force within every existent is only from Him, and He shines through them.

This is the mystery of the divine guidance of the world: all types

of light found in the mundane world shine from the Infinite Godhead who emanates His light continuously in all reality, which has its being from Him. He keeps everything in life and brings everything into being. There is nothing beside Him, and nothing exists except according to His will. No created being of all that exist can create anything apart from His divine power, neither intentionally nor accidentally.… He, however, provides life to all that is in being, and sets limits, size and measure to all that exists.

GOD IN RELATIONSHIP

Committing Oneself Entirely to God

'Sichot Moharan' 2, by Nachman of Breslav

The Chasidic emphasis on devekut, *'cleaving to God', is here exemplified by a complete reliance on God. Rebbe Nachman's followers, known as Breslav Chasidim, never appointed a successor to him as leader and are therefore known as 'Dead Chasidim', in Yiddish* toite Chasidim.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslav maintained that it is very good to cast oneself on God and to rely on him. He said:

> It is my way that when day breaks I hand over all my activities, including those of my children and those who are dependent upon me, to God, may He be blessed. So that everything will be according to His will, and this is very good. Then there is no need to worry or to think at all whether one is behaving in the right way or not, since one relies on Him. If He wants it in another way, then one should be willing to behave in a different manner according to His will. Similarly when the Sabbath or a festival comes, then I commit all my behaviour and all the subjects and activity of that Sabbath or festival to God, and trust that everything should be according to His will. Then however we behave on that Sabbath or festival day, we do not need to think or worry at all as to whether we fulfil his duty in the holy practice of that Sabbath or festival day, since we have already handed everything over to God, and we rely solely on Him, may He be blessed.

Searching for God

‘Degel Machaneh Ephraim’, Lech Lecha, by Moses Chaim Ephraim of Sudlikov (on Genesis 17:5: ‘Your name shall no more be called Avram’)

For Jews knowledge of God and contact with Him emerges from Jewish religious activity, particularly the study of Torah. Moses Chaim Ephraim’s grandfather was Israel Baal Shem Tov.

My master and grandfather, whose soul is in Eden, may his memory be for a blessing, explained the Rabbinic teaching, ‘Would that they abandoned me but kept my Torah’,[1] as follows:

There are really two types of people. One has resolved the following in his mind: ‘Since I have heard that the Holy One, blessed be He, is, as it were, the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*], why should I investigate Him?’ So he believes in God without investigation or analysis. This is not a way where light dwells.

There is, however, a second type of person who does not believe in this manner but rather through exploration and analysis. That is done through the study of Torah, as King David, peace be upon him, says, ‘Know the God of your fathers and serve Him.’[2] First you should know Him and afterwards serve Him. When such a person learns Torah and explores it, it is through this Torah that he recognizes the greatness of the Creator, may He and His name be blessed, realizing that He is the Infinite Godhead. Then he can cease any exploration completely, and all analysis and contemplation with regard to the divine nature. This is because of the high level of [his] awe of the Infinite Godhead, for he has [now] understood that God is infinite. In the domain of the Infinite who is able to contemplate anything?

This is why the Sages say, ‘Would that they abandoned me’. That means we must abandon contemplating the matter of divinity ‘but keep my Torah’. That means that through studying Torah, at first we grasp a little of the greatness of the Creator, but then because of the high level of awe we abandon any further investigation. We do not, however, simply believe immediately. About those who do it is said, ‘The fool believes everything.’[1]

God Behind All Activity

‘Meor Enayim’, Va-Etchanan, by Menachem Nachum

Though God is behind all things it is only those who attach themselves to Him who allow Him to act through them and receive His compassion.

A person should know through spiritual insight, and should believe this with a complete faith, that his deeds, words and all his movements, indeed, everything is actually the Creator, may He be blessed. It is He who guides everything and contracts[2] His Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] into all things. Certainly we should not seek any gift or reward, since it is God Himself, and not man, who does things. All human service is only so that we should not be separated and detached from our source, heaven forbid, so that God’s compassion would not be able to reach us. This would be ‘A bearer of false tidings dividing one from God’,[3] heaven forbid. Therefore when we are attached to the Creator, then God does everything, and His compassion can reach us.

Good Deeds All Performed by God

‘Vayechal Moshe’, by Moshe Elyakim Berea (on Psalm 62:13)

The illusion of human independence from God, even in the performance of religious duties, is expressed here. Divine compassion, however, treats the illusion as real.

> You, O Lord, have compassion, for You reward every person according to their deeds.[1]

The holy Rebbe Israel Baal Shem Tov explained this verse as follows. Man on his own account has no power or ability to perform any of the commandments *[mitzvot]* of the Creator, may He be blessed. A person can only do what God helps him to do through an impetus from above. Thus we find that it is not the person who performs the commandment but it is God. According to the law, therefore, no reward accrues to the person. Nevertheless, ‘You, O Lord, have compassion, for You reward every person according to their deeds.’ As if the person had actually done the good deed himself.

The Mercy of God

'Pri Tzaddik', Naso 37b, by Tzadok Hakohen

The sense of the presence of God in this mundane world is found particularly among the Chasidic mystics. Here is an interpretation of the humanity of God in the incarnation of the divine in the People of Israel. The Rebbe of Izbica is Mordecai Joseph Leiner, Hakohen's teacher. (Izbica is a town in Lublin province, Poland.)

For all the souls of Israel are known as the House of Jacob. Everything that happens to individual souls of Israel, whatever it may be, in the end they will remain in a holy condition, for they will never be completely banished.[2] As it says in Scripture, 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me.'[1] As we have heard from the Rebbe of Izbica, may his memory be for a blessing, every soul of Israel in whatever manner it falls, nevertheless falls into the bosom of God. One can say that it was about this idea that our Sages hinted when they said that the form of the biblical Patriarch Jacob was engraved on the Throne of Glory.[2] This is in line with the Scriptural verse, 'On the likeness of the Throne was a likeness in the appearance of a man.'[3] Certainly one cannot ascribe to Him, may He be blessed, any likeness, rather, as it were,[4] He contracts Himself into the souls of Israel, in all their details and according to their spiritual understanding. This is the likeness of a man.

HOLY SPIRIT

Achieving the Holy Spirit

'Shaarei Kedushah' 3:7, by Chaim Vital

The Holy Spirit represents the interaction between God and man. This is a description of the different ways in which an individual can achieve the level of the Holy Spirit.

With regard to the guidance of the Holy Spirit

[‘Ruach Ha-Kodesh’*] in our days.*

In the School of Elijah we have learnt: ‘I call heaven and earth as witness that whether it is a man or a woman, a Gentile or an Israelite, a slave or a maidservant, the Holy Spirit rests upon everyone according to their deeds.’[5]

Behold with our own ears we have heard, and with our own eyes we have seen, exceptional individuals who have achieved the Holy Spirit in our times, and were able to foretell future events. Amongst them were men of wisdom the like of which was not revealed in previous generations. In order not to weaken the hands of those who come to holiness to sanctify themselves, I will explain some matters, and open the merest small aperture,[1] and the good Lord will not hold back good for those who venture forth in a perfect way.… Behold the most preferable way… is the way travelled by the early ascetic pietists.[2] That is to repent with an absolute repentance for all the sins one has committed. After that one should perfect one’s soul through: keeping all the positive commandments; the correct inner intentions of one’s prayers; engaging in the study of Torah for its own sake with zeal, like an ox to the yoke, until one’s strength is weakened; lessening pleasures, eating and drinking; arising at midnight or a little before that, distancing oneself from all bad qualities and separating oneself from human contact, even from trivial conversation. After that one should purify one’s body by frequent bathing in a ritual bath [*mikveh*], spend time in seclusion and think about the fear of the Lord. One should place the four-lettered name of God[3] continuously before one’s eyes, take care to clear one’s mind from all this-worldly vanities and attach oneself to the love of God, may He be blessed, with great desire. Through all this it is possible that one will merit the Holy Spirit in one of the following ways.

The first is that a person draws the upper light, from the source of his supernal soul, upon his soul and it will be revealed to him. This is the complete attainment of the Holy Spirit.

The second is through a person’s involvement in the study of Torah. Or in his fulfilment of a particular commandment [*mitzvah*], as our Sages have explained: ‘Anyone who performs one commandment acquires for himself a heavenly advocate.’[4] From this an actual angel is created, on the condition that he performs

this commandment continuously, with great focus of mind, in accordance with Jewish law [*halakhah*]. Then this angel [*maggid*] will reveal itself to him… but if the commandment is not performed correctly, then the angel will be a mixture of good and evil, truth and falsehood.

The third is that through piety Elijah,[1] may his memory be for a blessing, will reveal himself to him. The magnitude of the revelation to him will be according to the measure of his piety.

The fourth is the greatest of them all. That is when a person merits that a soul of one of the righteous people of an earlier time reveals itself to him. This soul may come from the very source of his own soul,[2] or from another place if he performed the same commandment correctly as [that righteous person] did. Those who merit this spiritual level will achieve the point where they will be informed of wonderful wisdom and hidden secrets of the Torah, all according to their deeds.

The fifth, which is the lowest level of all, is that a person will see future things and wisdom in his dreams, which are close to the Holy Spirit.

This is the most straightforward way [to achieve the Holy Spirit]. For since a person is neither conjuring up, nor forcing, angelic beings, but is acting through his own good deeds and holiness, then certainly the pure Holy Spirit rests upon him, without any admixture of evil at all. This is not so when a person forces, or seeks a way of conjuring up, spiritual things through the power of deeds, prayers and mystical unifications, for then if one makes even a small mistake it is possible that external forces [*Sitra Achra*] will be mixed up with it.

Prophecy and the Holy Spirit

‘Shaarei Kedushah’ 3:8

The following is a more ascetic version of how one can achieve the Holy Spirit.

At the time that a person prepares himself to receive the Holy Spirit [*Ruach Ha-Kodesh*], after he has acquired all the good qualities as part of his nature, he should enter a house alone. [He should do this

after] having bathed in a ritual bath in holiness, in a place where he will not be disturbed by human voices or by the chirping of birds. These things are preferably done after midnight. He should close his eyes and remove any thoughts of this world from his mind, as if his soul has departed from him and he is like a corpse that does not feel anything. After that he should strengthen himself and fortify his powerful desire to contemplate the upper world, to cleave there to the source of his soul and to the upper lights. He should imagine that his soul has left his body and has ascended above. He should conjure up the form of the heavenly worlds as if he were standing among them. If he has performed any acts of unification,[1] he should think about them in order to draw down the light and the divine flow into all the worlds, and he should have the intention also to receive his own portion at the end.

He should isolate himself in his thought as if the Spirit had rested upon him, for a short while. If he does not feel anything it would seem that he is not yet in a satisfactory condition and is not yet fit, and therefore he should strengthen himself some more in the service [of God] and in holiness. He should return after several days to seclude himself in this manner repeatedly until he merits it and the Spirit rests on him. When it does rest on him he needs to distinguish if he is perhaps not yet pure and clean and if the spirit is that of the Side of Evil [*Sitra Achra*], or at least a mixture of evil with good. The incident with Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma when they ascended to Paradise[2] proves this.

He should be able to determine, through what is revealed to him, if all his words are true or are falsehood mixed with truth. If his words are insignificant, associated with this-worldly vanities, or are words which are not according to the Torah, and similar matters, then it would be necessary to discard it [this mystical experience][3] from himself. Also he should strengthen himself more and more in the service of God until all his words are trustworthy and [imbued] with the fear of heaven.

He should know that in the beginning the spirit will rest upon him occasionally at infrequent times, his speech will be facile and not profound, and his words will be few. As he goes on his power will grow stronger in all these details. The general rule is the purification of material nature to an ultimate extent and the complete removal of all thoughts, and the power of the imagination

associated with them. He should cleave to the upper worlds in the most complete manner of cleaving.

Holy Spirit and Holy Speech

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:78, by Nachman of Breslav

This variation on the incarnation theme associates the air that a person breathes in and out in holiness with the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word for spirit, ruach, *is the same as that for wind.*

A person lives only because he breathes. What is a breath? That is when a person exhales and inhales air.… Therefore when a person cleaves to the Holy King and speaks words of Torah and prayer, he exhales and inhales the Holy Spirit. This is what Scripture says: I will put a new spirit within you',[1] that is *in your midst.* Thus when a person breathes a breath of holiness, then I will put a new spirit', that is the Holy Spirit (within you).

IDOLS

Worship of Man

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Avraham, by Elijah Hakohen

Recognition of the divine within man seems to infringe prohibitions on idol worship. The following selection tries to reconcile these and to differentiate Jewish approaches from those of Christianity. Abraham was visited by three angels in the form of men.

> And he [Abraham] lifted up his eyes, and he looked. Behold three men were standing opposite him. When he saw them he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.[1]

How could Abraham have bowed down to the angels? Surely bowing down is one of the four prohibited forms of worship [in the prohibition of idolatry]. So how was it permitted to Abraham to bow down, which would appear that he was making them into

gods? The answer to this question is as follows. It is indeed prohibited to bow down to any form or visage except for the human form or visage, because that has in it the image of God. As it says, 'For in the image of God He made man.'[2] Thus a person bows down to the image of God. When angels clothe themselves in the form of a man, it is permitted to bow down to them.

If, however, a man regards himself as divine it is forbidden even to rise before him, so how much more to bow down to him? One cannot say that one intends to bow down to the image of God in such a case.… There does seem to be a difficulty, since Gentiles do not have the divine image like Israel who are circumcised properly, and there are other differences between Israel and the nations as is known.

Furthermore the divine image departs from even a circumcised Israelite man if he is wicked, and every animal and wild beast is able to overcome him. Therefore, as our Sages explain, it is forbidden to look at the face of an evil man.[3]… Perhaps one can say that when the divine image leaves man, this is something hidden from the sense of sight, and there is no way of distinguishing it. For all Israel and all Gentiles are equal in the manner of their human form which is made in the image of God.

Therefore when one bows down to a Gentile, one intends to bow down to the human form which is made in the divine image.

> But if a demon appears to man, even though it appears in human form, it is prohibited to bow down to it, because a demon considers itself an idol, and such a demon is like a Gentile who considers himself a god,[1] to whom it is forbidden to bow down, even though he has human form. For demons appear to humans to request that they should offer incense to them.

Even to Worship Holiness in Man Is Idolatry

'Nefesh Hachaim' 3:9, by Chaim of Volozhin

Included in the prohibition of idolatrous worship is the worship of anything but the one God. Even the worship of the Holy Spirit within a human being is regarded as a form of idol worship according to Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin. He was the most important disciple of Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, the spiritual head and mentor of Mitnaggedic Judaism.

The Mitnaggedic Movement did not approve of the special role assigned to the Tzaddik, *or holy master, of the Chasidic Movement. There is also something of an anti-Christian, as well as an anti-Chasidic, polemic in the following.*

Among [the worshippers of idols in the past] were those who worshipped, sacrificed and offered up incense to a certain man whom they regarded as possessing a very great destiny.[2] They thought that through their worship and devotion to him their destiny would ascend with his destiny. There were some who, although the intention of their worship was not for this-worldly benefits, wanted to achieve through this some intellectual attainment which they desired, such as the wisdom of magic and similar matters. There were some who attached themselves to the worship of a certain man in order to draw forth the influence of some techniques and knowledge of the future. All of this is real idolatry, and it is included in the verse, 'You shall have no other gods.'[3] Even to make oneself subservient and attach oneself to some worship of the aspect of the Holy Spirit within a certain person who is a prophet or someone possessed of the Holy Spirit, this is also called real idolatry.

DIVINE IMMANENCE

Divine Immanence, a Parable

'Keter Shem Tov', section 51, vol. 1, p. 15, by Aaron of Apt

Extreme interpretations of divine immanence were favoured by some Chasidic masters, a position close to pantheism, 'everything is God', but more usually referred to as pan-en-theism meaning 'everything is within God'. In the following the illusory character of a world separate from God is stressed.

A certain king was very wise and through a magic illusion he made walls, towers and gates around him. He commanded his citizens to come to him through these gates and towers. He also commanded his servants to scatter the king's treasures in front of each gateway.

There were those of his citizens who went as far as the first gate, took the riches and returned home. This continued at various gates, until the king's only son made a great effort to go all the way to the king his father, so that no obstacle would divide him from his father. For everything was really a magical illusion. This parable is understood as follows: The Holy One, blessed be He, conceals Himself behind various garments and partitions. We should know that God fills all the world with His glory, and that every movement and thought comes from Him. Similarly all the angels and all the heavenly halls are created and made, as it were, from His essence, like a snail whose garment is made out of his own body.[1] There is absolutely no partition which separates man from God when we know this.[2]

Suffering and God

'Toldot Yaakov Yosef', Vayakhel, by Jacob Joseph Katz of Polonnoye

God is felt to be with a person even in extremis, and this realization itself removes the suffering itself.

I have received a teaching from my master Rebbe Israel Baal Shem Tov with regard to all suffering, whether physical or spiritual, which people experience. They should focus their mind on the idea that God Himself, may He be blessed, is also in this suffering but He is clothed in a garment there. When one realizes this the garment is removed and the suffering ceases.

Divine Immanence Even in Stories

'Toldot Yaakov Yosef, concluding section

Chasidic mystics emphasized the presence of God in the most mundane things, even in stories.

The essential thing is that people should focus their minds in order to understand that God, may He be blessed, is in every place and in every undertaking. If so one can also sense aspects of the Creator,

may His name be blessed, in stories just as in one's study of Torah and one's prayers.

Prayer about God Hidden in Everything

'Likkutei Tefillot' 1:56, by Nathan of Nemirov

The theme of divine immanence involves a belief that God is hidden in all things, even sins, and it is the task of the Jew to reveal Him, as in this prayer based on the teachings of Nachman of Breslav (Nathan of Nemirov was his most important disciple).

Master of the Universe, who is near to those who call out to Him in truth, grant us the merit to know that You exist always, at all times, in each person and in every place. Even in the most hidden depths of concealment You are to be found there. For You, in Your essence, are hidden among all concealed things in the world.… You are to be found there, for there is no place where You are absent.… Without You there is no life in anything in the world. Even all the Shells [*Kelippot*], all the impurities in the world, all of the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*] and all the concealing forces in the world which mask Your divinity, all of them only have the life and power which they receive from Your essence… Grant me merit to reveal that which is concealed within concealment and to transform it into knowledge, so that from concealment the holy Torah will be made. The hidden holy Torah will be revealed there in the midst of that which is concealed within concealment. We should have the merit to reveal the secrets of the Torah. [That is] to understand and grasp the mysteries of the Torah until we reach the point that we hear the great proclaiming voice of the holy Torah, which cries out and calls continuously with a powerful voice: 'How long will you foolish ones love foolishness.'[1] Through our great sins, however, we do not hear the voice of this proclamation.

Divine Even in Gentile Stories

'Sichot Moharan', section 52

The implication of divine immanence is that God can be experienced in

the secular world, that even the stories of Gentiles can have a religious message.

The Glory of God, may He be blessed, cries out from everything, for His Glory fills the whole earth. The Glory of God even cries out from stories of the Gentiles, as it is written, 'They tell of His glory among the Gentiles.'[2] For even in the stories of the Gentiles the Glory of God cries out, since His Glory cries out continuously and hints to man that he should draw near to Him, and He will draw him near with compassion, with love and with great affection.

SEFIROT

Sefirot Expounded by the Prophet Elijah

'Tikkunei Zohar', Second Introduction, p. 17a

The doctrine of the Ten Sefirot, *the structures through which the unknowable God interfaces with the world, is a central teaching of Kabbalah. This passage is a classical outline of the* Sefirot *doctrine, careful to emphasize that they are not to be understood as representing a multiplicity of divinities*.

Elijah began to expound and said: Master of the Universe [*Ein Sof*], You are one, but not in a numerical sense, You are elevated above all elevated beings, hidden beyond all hidden things,[1] thought cannot grasp You at all. It is You who have brought out the ten structures – we call them the Ten *Sefirot* – to control and guide hidden worlds, which have not been revealed, and worlds which have been revealed. In them You hide Yourself from humans, and You bind them together and unite them. Since You are inside them anyone who separates one of these ten from the others, it is as if he made a separation in You.[2]

These Ten *Sefirot* are set out in order, one long, one short, and one in between.[3] It is You who direct them and there is nothing, either above or below or from any side, which directs You. You have assigned garments for them from which souls blossom forth for human beings. You have assigned a number of bodies to them;

they are called bodies because of the garments which cover them. In this form[4] they are called *Chesed* (Compassion) – the right arm; *Gevurah* (Might) – the left arm; *Tiferet* (Beauty) – the body; *Netzach* (Victory) and *Hod* (Glory) – the two thighs; *Yesod* (Foundation) – the end of the body, the sign of the holy covenant;[1] *Malkhut* (Kingship) – the mouth, we call her the Oral Torah;[2] *Chokhmah* (Wisdom) – the brain, that is the inner thoughts; *Binah* (Understanding) – the heart, and through her the heart understands (concerning these two it is written 'The hidden things are with the Lord our God'[3]); *Keter Elyon* (The Upper Crown) – the crown of kingship [*Keter Malkhut*].

Sefirot as Vessels

'Pardes Rimmonim' 4:4, by Moses Cordovero

The following is a more philosophical explanation of the doctrine of the Ten Sefirot *and why belief in them is not polytheistic*.

There can be no change in the Emanator Himself, and no divisions within Him, that would justify the idea that He is divided into parts as represented by the Ten *Sefirot*. For there can be no change or division within Him, rather these are in the external *Sefirot*.

We can depict this in the manner of a comparison so that it can be grasped by the intellect. It is like water which is divided up into various vessels. These vessels are differently coloured, one white, one red, one green, etc. When the water spreads out among these vessels, although the water is plain and colourless, it appears to have changed its colour and taken on the colours of the vessels. According to the truth, however, the changes of colour do not actually affect the water. It is only the different vessels that make the colour of the water seem to change without actually doing so. This appearance of colour is in the sight of the beholders and not in the water itself.

The same applies to the *Sefirot*. The [coloured] vessels are the *Sefirot* which we know as Compassion, Strict Justice and Beauty.[1] The colours white, red and green represent their different activities. The light of the Emanator, which is of His essence, is the ten lights spread out in the ten [vessels], that is the water which does not

have any colour at all. For they are unembellished without any change or any [defined] activity. Change only takes place through the vessels which are different in their activities. There is no change whatsoever in the [divine] essence which spreads through the *Sefirot*, except in its appearance in the eyes of those who see them. That is according to those who receive them but not in the light itself.

Sefirot and Human Thought

'Maggid Devarav LeYaakov (Likkutei Amarim)', section 34, p. 12a,
by Dov Baer of Mezheritch

In Jewish mysticism the Sefirot *are the very structure of the human mind, and thus for Chasidic thought, which emphasizes the psychological dimension of Kabbalah, they are an entrance point into the higher, divine world.*

If the thought of beauty comes into a person's mind, then he is in the world of beauty, of the *Sefirah* Beauty. If the thought of love comes into his mind, he is in the world of love, of the *Sefirah* Compassion. The same is true of the other qualities of the seven days of the building, which are the seven lower *Sefirot*. If he is wise and removes himself from physicality, then he can attach himself to that upper love in the qualities [i.e. the *Sefirot*] of the Creator, may His name be blessed. Although the love which now comes into one's thoughts relates to this world, one can remove oneself from this physicality to cleave to the upper root of love.

THE DIVINE PRESENCE (*SHEKHINAH*)

The World Maintained by the *Shekhinah*

'Zohar' 3:123a, Naso Reiya Mehemna

The lowest level of God, the Shekhinah, *representing the feminine aspect of the divine, is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the*

world.

Through the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*][1] the world was created, and on Her the heavens, the earth, the sea and all the creatures that were created, are established… If She were to distance Herself from this world even for a moment, everything would be destroyed and nullified, and the world would not be able to remain in existence.… When She does leave a person, the venom of death comes and rests on him. This is known as impurity, corpse, defect, angel of death, darkness, gloom, and it rests on the body of a person. When this happens the person is called dead. The secret meaning of the matter is reflected in the verse, 'For I do not desire that the dead should die, says the Lord God, so turn back and live.'[2] All of the positive commandments, which should have dwelt in his 248 organs[3] in the future, mourn for him.… The 248 organs of the body also mourn for him, for they are a reflection of the upper structure ['image' or 'form'] which is in place on his head where the Tetragrammaton[4] rests. Just as there is a good structure on a righteous person, which guides him to do all the good deeds and to merit the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*][1] , so there is an evil structure on the head of the wicked, which guides them in their evil deeds so that they inherit Purgatory [*Gehinnom*].… Through the deeds of a person one can recognize the visage which is over him and the visage of his face.… Because of this a person is dealt with according to the measure that he himself deals with others. Each visage has a controlling angel over it.

God Inside Man

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Tisa, by Chaim Vital

One of the most distinctive concepts of Jewish mysticism is the idea of the Shekhinah. *Although found in exoteric Judaism as well, it was the Kabbalists who gave Her pride of place in their depiction of God. Here is seen the indwelling of God in each individual, if they are worthy.*

> Rabbi Eleazar said: A person should see himself as if the Holy One dwells in his innards, as it says, 'The Holy One is in your midst.'[2]

The secret meaning of the matter is that all worlds are a chariot [*merkabah*][3] and a throne one to another. For the body is a garment and cover for the vital soul [*nefesh*], the vital soul for the spirit [*ruach*], the spirit for the higher soul [*neshamah*] and the higher soul for Him, may He be blessed, who dwells inside and in the midst of a person. This is the secret meaning of the idea that the Patriarchs are the [divine] chariot [*merkabah*].[4]

Exile and Redemption of Lost Souls

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Re-eh, by Chaim Vital

God's immanence in the world, exemplified by the notion of the Divine Presence going into exile with the People of Israel, is a redemptive presence. It redeems the lost souls in exile.

Through the sin of Adam, the first man, good and evil were fused together. All the souls of holiness fell into the Shells, and they do not have the strength to extricate themselves without the compassion of God. For 'In all their afflictions He too is afflicted.'[1] The Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] of His power goes into exile with Israel into the midst of the Shells. When the Divine Presence enters their place, She gathers up the souls from there. Behold there are seventy Shells, corresponding to the seventy nations, and Israel needs to be in exile among all of them in order to gather up all the souls that fell into every Shell that is in them.

Marriage and the *Shekhinah*

'Tomer Devorah' 9, by Moses Cordovero

The feminine aspect of God, exemplified in the Shekhinah, *serves as a model for relations between the sexes.*

A person should be very careful to act in such a way so that the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] will cleave to him, and not separate Herself from him. Until a man has married a woman it is obvious that the Divine Presence is not with him at all. For the Divine Presence is essentially with man through contact with the female.

Man stands between two females. There is the lower, physical female, who takes from him sustenance, clothing and sexual relations. There is also the Divine Presence who stands over him to bless him with all these things, which he can give time and again to his wife, with whom he is in covenantal relationship. This is just like the *Sefirah* Beauty [*Tiferet*] which is also positioned between two females: one is the Supernal Mother [*Binah*],[1] who causes all his needs to flow down to Him and the other is the Lower Mother [*Malkhut*], who receives from Him sustenance, clothing and sexual relations, symbolized in the *Sefirot* of Love [*Chesed*], Judgement [*Din*] and Compassion [*Rachamin*] as is known. The Divine Presence will not come to a person if he does not reflect the heavenly reality in his own life.

TETRAGRAMMATON

Tetragrammaton and Divine Immanence

'Likkutim Yekarim', by Phineas Shapiro of Koretz (1726–91)

The divine names play a central role in Jewish mysticism, not merely because language has creative power – the world being created by words or sound according to the Bible – but because names are reflections of the real essence of things. A special role is assigned to divine names, foremost of which is the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter name of God, which is never pronounced and thus symbolizes His hidden essence, and which in mysterious ways reflects something of the divine essence.

Our Sages say that the light of the Creation refers to the deeds of the righteous.[2] The explanation of this is that a wise person is able to eat good food and other enjoyable things and still be able to behave ascetically. Similarly he is able to look at any place he wishes and yet at the same time not to see beyond his immediate environment.[3] That is he should always see the Tetragrammaton, which is inside each thing. This is the secret meaning of the verse, 'I have set the Lord always before me', and of the Rabbinic teaching, 'Do not look at the pot but at what is inside it.'[1] For the essence of everything in the universe is the spirituality within it, which comes

from God, may He be blessed, who gives it meaning and keeps it in existence. The same is true of speech. One can speak even trivial matters on occasion and yet be attached to God. The same is true of prayer. A person can engage in the prayerful worship of God, without this worship being apparent at all to other people. That is he does not make any movement at all with his limbs, only in the inwardness of his soul. His heart is on fire and he cries out silently because of his enthusiasm. In this manner his worship in the inwardness of his heart is greater than his worship with his outer limbs when it is apparent to others.

TORAH

Torah and Garments

'Zohar' 3:152a, Behaalotecha

The Zohar explains here that the underlying secret mystical interpretation of the Bible is the true one, and condemns those that take the text of Scripture literally.

Rabbi Simeon said: Woe to a person who says that the Torah[2] comes to display general stories and mundane things. For if this were so even in our own day, we would be able to make a Torah out of mundane things better than all of them [the Bible stories]. If the Torah does indeed display a merely worldly subject matter, well then, princes have superior textual compilations.[3] We could therefore go along with them and make a Torah from their compilations. Rather all the words of the Torah are heavenly words and celestial secrets.… Concerning the heavenly angels it is written: 'He [God] makes His angels pure spirits.'[1] At the time they descend below, they clothe themselves in this-worldly garments,[2] for if they did not wear garments of a this-worldly type they would not be able to survive in this world, nor would the world be able to tolerate their presence.

If this is the case with angels how much more so is it the case with the Torah, which created them and created all the worlds, and which their continued existence depends on.

Thus when the Torah comes down to this world,[3] if it did not clothe itself in this-worldly garments the world would not be able to endure it.

Therefore the story form of the Torah is a garment of the Torah. Anyone who thinks that this garment is the sole reality of the Torah, his spirit will waste away and he will not have a portion in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*]…. There are human garments that everyone can see. Fools see a person wearing a garment that appears attractive and look no further. They think the garment is the body, and they also think that the body is the soul.

In a similar way the Torah has a body, namely the commandments of the Torah… This body arrays itself in garments which are stories about this world. Fools in the world only look at the garments, which are the stories of the Torah, and do not comprehend more than that, not looking at what is beneath the garments. Those with more understanding do not pay attention simply to the garments, but look at the body underneath the clothing. Wise people, servants of the heavenly King, who have actually stood at Mt Sinai,[4] only look at the soul,[5] which is the true essence of everything, the real Torah. In the future time they will be destined to become aware of the soul of the soul [*neshamah* of the *neshamah*] of the Torah.[1]

Come and see! This is also true in the heavenly world above where there are clothing, body, soul, and soul of the soul. The heavens and their hosts are the clothing, and the Community of Israel [*Knesset Yisrael*][2] is the body which accepts the soul, which itself is the Glory of Israel [*Tiferet Yisrael*], and it is therefore the body of the soul. The soul that we have said is the Glory of Israel, is the real Torah and the soul of the soul is the Holy Ancient One,[3] and they are all connected to each other. Woe to those wicked ones who say that the Torah is only ordinary stories: they look only at the clothing and at nothing more. Happy are the righteous people who look at the Torah in the correct manner. Just as wine cannot survive except in a plain flask,[4] so the Torah cannot survive except in its clothing. Therefore one should only look at what is beneath the outer garment, for all those mundane matters and all the stories are really garments.

Torah the Source of All

‘Zohar’ 3:166b, Shelach Lecha

While for exoteric Judaism the holy Torah is the divine word to man, for the Jewish mystics it also represents something of the divine core at the heart of all reality.

Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai began his discourse and said:

> O Torah, Torah, the light of all the worlds. How many oceans and streams and water sources and springs spread out from you on all sides. Everything is from you. Upon you the higher and lower worlds stand. The upper light emerges from you. O Torah, Torah, what can one say about you? You are ‘a beloved female deer and a graceful doe’;[1] both above and below they love you. Who is worthy to suckle from you in a fitting manner? O Torah, Torah, the joy of your Master, who can reveal and express your secrets and mysteries?

He cried, placed his head between his knees and kissed the earth.

Torah of the Messiah

‘Etz Chaim’, Introduction

Central to the Kabbalist outlook is the belief that the Torah as it is known in Jewish religion is merely the surface of a deeper divine teaching implicit within it, which will only be revealed fully at the end of days.

The Torah of this world is clothed in the Shells.[2] The reason is because the Evil Inclination [*yetzer ha-ra*] which is called a Shell is found in this world. This Torah [of this world] is of little worth[3] compared to the Torah of the Messiah which has partially removed its clothing and its Shells, since people will also disrobe the Shell of the Evil Inclination. How much more so is this true when we shall be in the heavenly realm, the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], the world of the souls, where we will remove all manner of garments. Then our involvement with the Torah will be with the very soul of the Torah and its innermost secret mysteries.

Essence of Torah Revealed in Messianic Times

‘Maggid Devarav LeYaakov (Likkutei Amarim)’, section *6*, p. *66*

Chasidic mysticism continued the main line of Kabbalistic teaching about a secret Torah within the mundane Torah.

The essence[1] of Torah has not yet been revealed, for behold the whole Torah has been gathered together from righteous men from Adam, the Patriarchs and Moses, who brought God’s Divine Presence *[Shekhinah]* into their activities. This is a perfect Torah but the clarity of its essence has not yet been revealed until the Messiah comes, then people will understand the clarity of its essence. This is what is meant by the verse ‘For a new Torah will be obtained from Me.’[2] The interpretation of ‘from Me’ is ‘from My essence’. This is also what Ezekiel prophesied when he saw the future Temple [of the Messianic era], and said ‘Can these essences live?’[3] This refers to the essences of the Torah.

Torah Is God

‘Nefesh Hachaim’ 4:10

The Kabbalistic school of the Mitnaggedim centred their religious approach around the intellectual and spiritual exercise of Torah study. Rabbi Chaim sets out his view of Torah study and its value.

At the time that a person occupies himself with, and reflects on, Torah he certainly does not need any specific attachment *[devekut]* to God. Through the occupation and reflection alone he attaches himself to the will and word of God, may He be blessed, and He, His will and His word are one. This is what our Sages have said:

> When someone buys an article, is he then able to acquire its owner too? But the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel and He says to them: ‘You are acquiring Me, as it were.’[1]

It is written a number of times in the Zohar that the Holy One and the Torah are one.[2] More than that we find in the Zohar:

> We have learned that the Holy One, blessed be He, is called Torah.… And there is no Torah but the Holy One.[3]

It is also true that the upper root of the holy Torah is in the highest level of the worlds that are called the worlds of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*]… That is why the Sages say that the Torah preceded the world, that is it preceded all worlds. For they even say that it preceded the Throne of Glory. The truth is, as it were [*keveyakhol*], that it preceded even the World of Emanation [*Atzilut*].… Therefore from it all the upper and lower worlds emanated.

The Torah Renews Itself

'Mei Hashiloach', Beshalach, by Mordecai Joseph Leiner of Izbica

The Chasidic Movement produced a number of creative mystical thinkers, including Rebbe Leiner, for whom the Torah was a dynamic, not a static, element in the continuing revelation of the divine.

'And Moses led the Israelites onwards [from the Red Sea].'[4] When Moses saw that the prophetess Miriam had sung her song, he understood that the time had arrived to travel on from this place. For this is the way of God, may He be blessed, at the time that He provides the renewal of the words of Torah to Israel, He first of all introduces it into the hearts of great individuals and of the righteous among them. After that the matter spreads forth till it comes to the hearts of all Israel, even to the smallest of the small. [This continues] till this holiness comes even into the hearts of the women, and then this renewal is complete. That is, it is fixed in the hearts of Israel and then there is a need to generate a renewal of the words of Torah.

Thus it was here, for the song was first in the mouth of Moses and after that in the mouth of Israel. When it says that Miriam answered them [in song], then 'Moses led the Israelites onwards.' That is [he said to them], You have heard, you have no more dealings with this subject, for you have finished what you needed, and now we need a renewal of the words of Torah.

Continuous Giving of the Torah

‘Mei Hashiloach’ 1:21b, second foliation, Likkutei Hashas Nedarim

The idea of revelation as continuous and progressive is characteristic of Rebbe Leiner’s school of Chasidic Kabbalah.

> This question was asked of the Sages and Prophets, but they never explained it until the Holy One, blessed be He, explained it Himself. ‘Why was the land lost: because they forsook my Torah’… Rabbi Judah said, ‘They did not make a blessing over the Torah first.’[1]

That is the blessing over the Torah, ‘who has chosen us [from all peoples]’, and its conclusion, ‘blessed are You who is giving the Torah’. The wisdom of the Torah, in its simple form, includes all wisdom in the world and all natural wisdom.… For God has given His Torah as an inheritance and renews the work of creation every day with a new divine influence through words of Torah as necessitated by this moment, this place and this soul.… This is what the expression ‘Who is giving the Torah’ indicates, for it is in the continual present tense and not ‘who has given’ in the past tense.…

That is why Rabbi Judah said that they did not make a blessing on the Torah first [before studying it]. That is that although they learnt a lot of Torah they did not make the blessing ‘Who is giving the Torah’ first, to achieve the light of the new aspect that God is giving at this moment through the Torah that they are learning now.

Mystical Secrets of the Torah

‘Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav’, p. 60, by Jacob Shalom Hakohen

While mystic experience is often seen as independent of organized religion, there has always been a strong belief among Kabbalists of all persuasions that Kabbalah needs a basis in Jewish religion, the perfection of which enables the soul to progress to higher levels of insight and understanding.

There are four levels of interpretation of the Torah: the simple literal level [*peshat*], hints [*remez*], Midrashic interpretation

[*derash*] and mystical secrets [*sod*]. The 'simple literal level' relates to the vital-soul [*nefesh*]; 'hints' relate to the spirit [*ruach*]; 'Midrashic interpretation' relates to the higher soul [*neshamah*]; and 'mystical secrets' relate to the soul of the soul [*neshamah* of the *neshamah*]. A person first of all needs to become involved with the simple literal level of the Torah, to keep and to establish this, so that he purifies his vital-soul and merits reaching the level of spirit. The principal part and the foundation is the simple literal level of the Torah, for as long as a person has not purified his vital-soul in a fitting manner through the simple literal level of interpretation of the Torah, he is not able to become involved with the inner meaning of the Torah. For this would be dangerous for him.

As our lord, master and teacher Rabbi Elimelekh said, 'Let my vital-soul not come into their secret.'[1] A person who only exists on the level of vital-soul should not engage in the secrets of the Torah, for only through purifying his vital-soul with the simple literal level of Torah does he merit the level of spirit. He can then come to the Midrashic interpretation of Torah, thus meriting the level of higher soul, and he can acquire the hints in the Torah, and after that he merits an even higher soul [*chayah*] and acquires the secrets of the Torah.

Torah Learning

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 61

In popular mystical folklore, particularly of the Chasidic variety, simple piety, without the accompaniment of great intellectual understanding or of spiritual insight, can attach a person to God.

Come and see what happened with a pious man [*chasid*] who lived in a little village and had no books except for one tractate of the Talmud, *Chagigah*. All his life this pious man involved himself in the study of the tractate *Chagigah*. He lived for a long time and at the end of his life, just before he died, this tractate clothed itself in the form of a woman,[1] and when he died she walked ahead of him taking him to the Garden of Eden.

Small Talk Is Also Torah

‘Tzidkat Hatzaddik’ 118, by Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin

The idea of a continually renewed revelation which conveys insight into the workings of the world itself is expressed in this Chasidic teaching.

Even the casual conversation of a person who is a sage needs to be studied, as our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, have said.[2] There is a power, even in small talk, to rectify souls, for they are actually words of Torah. Our Sages remark that all of their casual conversations are Torah.[1] Thus when we find narratives of events in the Torah, and features in the Talmud that seem like secular stories, they are actual Torah like all other words of Torah. The greater a person is the greater is his casual conversation than the Torah of his fellow. Just as they have said, ‘The small talk of the servants of the fathers is greater than the Torah of the children.’[2]

TRANSCENDENCE

Divine Transcendence and Freedom

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 21:4

The idea of human independence from God, the source of all, represented a paradox for Jewish mystics. Here this is resolved by viewing human freedom as a lesser stage of spiritual consciousness, beyond which is an all-embracing unity with the divine in which ‘seeming’ human freedom is transcended. This is possible because divine transcendence is seen not so much as a characteristic of God himself, but as a condition of humans for whom God’s being is beyond their normal consciousness.

Intuitive knowledge[3] of God is very great, so great that the conscious mind cannot endure it, and it does not enter consciousness for it surrounds the head. We see this with a number of deep wisdoms which the human mind is unable to comprehend properly. This is like very many paradoxes that we are perplexed by, such as divine foreknowledge and human free will,[4] where the mind of man is not able to understand such foreknowledge.

This intuitive knowledge of the divine represents the surrounding divine transcendence which cannot enter the inner parts of the mind but surrounds it on the outside. The inner human intelligence receives its life force from this transcending intuitive knowledge.

You should know that this is the essence of the power of free choice. As long as the human intellect is not large enough to comprehend the ideas of foreknowledge and free will, then the power of free choice remains outside, for a person has the ability to choose life or its opposite. When the transcending intuitive knowledge enters inside the human mind, however, then because of the expansion of the human intellect, the person leaves the limitations of human existence and is raised to the level of an angel. At that point free will ceases to exist.[1] This is the very essence of the power of free will, namely that the human intellect cannot grasp the two contradictory ideas of divine foreknowledge and free will.

Perceiving Divine Transcendence

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:7:6

Emptying one's own mind, by passing on knowledge to others, makes way for divine knowledge to enter. Thus teaching Torah is a path to spiritual growth because it allows the transcendent divine to enter one's consciousness.

It is through being concerned with one's fellow human beings, bringing them knowledge and the fear of heaven, and by raising up pupils, that transcendent lights enter into a person. Thus one merits to understand and to know what he did not understand and know originally. For what a person understands and grasps with his intellect is an aspect of what is internal, for intelligence enters into his intellect. What is not able to enter into his mind, however, is what is impossible for him to understand. This is an aspect of divine transcendence. For this transcends and surrounds his mind, and it is impossible to bring it into the inwardness and inside of his mind. For it is unattainable and he cannot understand it, because it is transcendent in relation to him. When a person is engaged in speaking to people, and in bringing knowledge into their minds, his own mind is emptied of the intelligence and knowledge which he

had. Then through this the transcendent intelligence enters inwards. For it is through his mind being emptied, because he is bringing his own knowledge to his fellow, that the transcendent enters inwards. He merits to understanding that aspect of the transcendent intelligence, that is he understands what he was not able to understand originally.

CHAPTER 2
COSMOS

ASTROLOGY

Astrology and Torah

'Zohar' 3:216b, Bemidbar Reiya Mehemna

There is an ambiguous attitude to the truth of astrology. Astrology is only true for those who do not have the spiritual level of dependence on God and His Torah, while those who do attach themselves to God escape the determinism of astrology and are thus free.

Those who do not know the secret of reincarnation claim that children, life and sustenance do not depend on a person's merits but on astrological constellations [*mazal*].[1] Have we not seen how Abraham perceived through an astrological calculation of constellations that in the future he would not have a child. The Holy One, blessed be He, took him outside, as it is written:

> And He took him outside and said: Please look heavenward and count the stars if you are able to count them. He said to him: so will your seed be.[2]

We have been taught[3] that God said to him, 'Go out of your astrological mindset', and He brought him up beyond the stars and said to him look heavenward and count the stars.

These are the words of the Sages and they need to be interpreted in a mystical way. For all creatures in the world, before the Torah was given to Israel, depended on astrological constellations [*mazal*] for everything, even for children, life and sustenance. After the Torah was given to Israel, however, God brought them out from the determinism of stars and constellations… Because of this anyone who involves himself in the study of Torah in order to practise its

teachings nullifies the deterministic influence of stars and constellations on himself. If his purpose is not to practise its teachings, then it is as if he did not really study Torah at all, and he does not nullify the deterministic influence of stars and constellations. How much more is it true of ignorant people, who are compared to beasts and about whom it is said, 'Cursed be he who lies with a beast',[1] that the determinism of stars and constellations has not been nullified from them.

CREATION

Creation of the World

'Zohar' 1:15a–b, Bereshit

A highly charged, poetic but ultimately obscure depiction of the early stages of Creation.

In the beginning of the articulation of the will of the King, He engraved engravings on the upper aura of light.[2] A spark of darkness emerged within the impenetrable hiddenness from the secret recesses of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*], unformed plasma circular in nature, neither white nor black, neither red nor green, nor any colour at all. When He measured out space He formed colours to shine inside. Within the spark itself one spring emerged, hidden in the mystical recesses of the Infinite Godhead, from which the colours concretized below. Splitting asunder its atmosphere, yet not splitting it asunder, absolutely unknowable until from the midst of the pressure on the fault line, one supernal hidden point[1] shone forth. Beyond this point nothing can be known, therefore it is called the Beginning, the original creative saying[2] preceding everything.

Ein Sof and Creation

'Etz Chaim', shaar 1, anaf 2

Speculation about how an infinite God can produce a finite world was resolved by mainstream Kabbalah in the doctrine of self-contraction,

tzimtzum, *of the Godhead, depicted here from the Lurianic tradition.*

You should know that before emanations were emanated and created beings created, the supernal undifferentiated light filled all reality and there was no place empty, that is no vacant atmosphere or space. Everything, however, was filled with the undifferentiated light of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof]*, without beginning or end. Everything was one undifferentiated light, equal with a unified equality, and this is called the light of the Infinite Godhead. When it was His undifferentiated will to create the worlds and to emanate the emanations, to bring into being the perfection of His activities, His names and His epithets, since this was the cause for the creation of the worlds,… behold then He, the Infinite Godhead, contracted [from *tzimtzum*] Himself into a middle point which was in the very centre of His light.… He contracted that light and distanced it to the sides around the central point, and then an empty place, atmosphere and vacant space remained from this central point.… This contraction was completely equal on all sides, surrounding that vacant central point so that the space of that vacuum was circular, completely equidistant from all directions. It was not a square structure with corners in the figure, for the Infinite Godhead had contracted itself into a circle equidistant from all sides. The reason for this was in order that the light of the Infinite Godhead should be completely equal… so all emanations which were to be emanated in future, inside the vacant and completely empty space, were emanated in a circular structure. Thus they are all as near, and as attached, to the Infinite Godhead which surrounds them completely equally. The light and the divine flow that they need, they absorb from the Infinite Godhead from all sides in equal measure. This would not be so if they were emanated in a square, triangular or similar pattern. For then they would have a corner jutting out that made that side closer to the Infinite Godhead than the others, and they would not receive the light of the Infinite Godhead equally.

From Reality to Nothingness

‘Maggid Devarav LeYaakov (Likkutei Amarim)’, section 11, p. 8a

It is an accepted idea in Judaism that man is a partner with God in the

work of creation. In the following an early Chasidic leader provides a Kabbalistic interpretation.

The Talmud states: 'The deeds of the righteous are greater than the making of the heavens and the earth.'[1] The explanation of this is that the creation of the heavens and the earth was the formation of the reality of something from nothing. By contrast the righteous transform reality back to nothingness. For from all the things they do, even physical things like eating, they raise the holy sparks[2] from this food upward, and the same is true of every matter they engage in. So we find that they transform the real into the divine Nothing.

PURGATORY (*GEHINNOM*)

Gehinnom and Exile

'Chesed Le-avraham' 5:11

The worlds of good and evil and of sin, punishment and redemption are in continuous interplay according to the Kabbalah. The fight against the forces of impurity, the powers of the 'Other Side', takes place both on the individual level and the historical level of exile and redemption.

Sin causes a defect in the soul and out of this defect the soul draws on to itself a spirit of impurity from the Shell [*Kelippah*]. The soul thus becomes impure and defective from this spirit of impurity. It returns the soul to the fire of Purgatory [*Gehinnom*], the source of the spirit of impurity which envelops it, since everything goes back to its root. The fire of Purgatory consumes that spirit of impurity and returns it to itself, separating it off from the soul. The soul remains pure and clean to return to the source from which it was carved out.… The same is true of the exile of Israel. For just as they are drawn after the Shells and become impure in this world so the Holy One, blessed be He, exiles them to purify them through the mystery of exile.… The impurity which attaches itself to them through the sin of desecrating the Torah in the Land of Israel is consumed and nullified, bit by bit. At the time of the Messianic

Redemption they will be clarified and cleansed so that they will emerge from exile purified like refined silver.

Gehinnom and Mondays

'Bachya ben Asher' (on Genesis 1:4)

Time, space and numbers are not neutral for Kabbalists: they partake of the holy and the demonic as a reflection of the Creation. In the following the demonic dimension of Mondays, Purgatory and the number two is set out.

The Midrash asks why does it not say 'It was good' in the Creation story on Monday?[1] It answers that on that day Purgatory [*Gehinnom*] was created… and our Sages say that another reason was because on this day argument and dispute were also created, as it says: 'And to divide water from water'.[1]… If it cannot be said 'that it was good' about an argument and a dispute that was for the sake of rectifying the world and making it inhabitable, how much more so can one not say this about an argument and a dispute causing chaos in the world.

The explanation of this is that Monday, the second day of the week, is the beginning of duality, therefore it is called 'day two',[2] and it is the cause of all division and dispute. When the Sages say that argument, dispute and Purgatory were created on that day, we may understand from this that anyone who initiates an argument or a dispute will be judged in Purgatory. Since argument, dispute and Purgatory were all created on this day we learn that it is a destructive day; therefore our Sages prohibited anyone starting an undertaking on a Monday, and they said, 'One should not begin things on a Monday.'[3] For a similar reason it is prohibited to eat food items in pairs, for that is something which causes damage. This is why the Sages have said that a person should neither eat nor drink things in pairs.[4] The argument and dispute that was on the first Monday are the origin and cause of all later arguments and disputes.

Gehinnom and Abraham

‘Zohar’ 2:83b, Yitro

The role of Israel in God’s scheme of things is emphasized in Jewish mystical literature. Israel traces its merits back to the Patriarch Abraham.

Rabbi Isaac said: Why was the Torah given with fire and darkness? As it is written, ‘The mountain was burning with fire to the heart of heaven, darkness, cloud and thick gloom.’[5] The reason is because every person who is fully engaged with the study of Torah is saved from that other fire of Purgatory [*Gehinnom*], and from the darkness that the nations of the world surround Israel with.

It is through the merit of Abraham Israel is saved from the fire of Purgatory. We have learnt that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Abraham:

> As long as your children are fully engaged with the study of Torah they will be saved from the darkness and the fire of Purgatory. If they don’t, then the fire of Purgatory will take hold of them, and they will become enslaved among the nations.

Abraham replied to God:

> The matter should not involve two punishments,[1] but if You are willing, let them be saved from the fire of Purgatory. They can then be enslaved among the nations until they return to you in repentance.

God said to Abraham: ‘That is certainly all right.’

Gehinnom and This World

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 2:119

This reflection on the vanities and suffering of this world is rather world-weary in tone, yet it is not uncommon for Jewish mystics to reflect the much earlier world-weariness found in Ecclesiastes, which opens ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’

Rebbe Nachman (of Breslav) spoke to us several times about the sufferings of this mundane world. All people in the world are full of

suffering; there is no one who actually has real enjoyment of this world. Even very rich people, even princes, do not have any real enjoyment of this worldly life. For all their days are ones of anger and pain, and they are all full of continual troubles, worries, sadness, sorrow and moaning.

Each person has his own special suffering, and there is no one among the lords and princes who has everything always as he desires. All of them alike are full of continual suffering and worries. This is clear and known to all those who are even a little knowledgeable in them and their ways.… We see all this with our own eyes. This is true even of someone who imagines that he does have a full life in this world, and who enjoys all the pleasures, riches, possessions, honour, great wealth, magnificent palaces, wonderful vessels, jewellery and kingly treasures, etc. For if you observe him carefully, he is also continually full of anger and much suffering in a number of different forms and manners, as is apparent to the senses. It is not necessary to explain this to anyone who has a brain in his head and even occasionally observes such people truthfully….

This is valid for everyone in the world, from the smallest to the greatest, for they were all born to toil and are filled with anger and suffering. There is no possible solution or way out to save oneself from toil and woe, except to escape to God, may He be blessed, and to engage in Torah study. The Midrash interprets the verse 'Man is born for toil' to mean 'Happy is the man who has the merit to toil in Torah.'[1] That is since every person is born to toil, it is impossible to escape from this in any manner, even if one has all the space of the world. Therefore, every person will certainly have toil and suffering and many worries. Therefore, the sage who is aware[2] will transmute the toil into the toil of the Torah, for which he was born. Then he will be blissful, for he will be saved from the toil of this world and merit the life of the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*].

Our Rebbe, may his memory be for a blessing, said: Everyone says that there is a mundane world and also a World to Come. Behold, concerning the World to Come, we believe that there is indeed a World to Come. Perhaps there is also a mundane world in some other dimension; certainly here it appears to be Purgatory *[Gehinnom]*, for everyone is full of great suffering continually. He further said: This mundane world does not really exist at all.

Accepting Punishment in *Gehinnom*

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 28

The Chasidic Movement placed great emphasis on religious enthusiasm.

We have heard in the name of the holy Rabbi, our Master Elimelekh, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, that if the heavenly court should decide that one should be punished with the punishment of Purgatory *[Gehinnom]*, then with all one's strength and great desire one should jump in there to fulfil the will of God.

PARADISE

Four Sages in Paradise

'TB', Chagigah 14b

This classical, though enigmatic, passage about the journey of mystics in the second century CE was taken to indicate the dangers of the mystical enterprise.

Our Rabbis taught: Four [sages] entered Paradise and they are: Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Acher[1] and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva said to them:

> When you reach the stones of pure marble, do not say: 'Water, water!' For it is said: 'He that speaks falsehood shall not stand before My eyes.'[2]

Ben Azzai gazed and died. Of him Scripture says: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His pious ones.'[1] Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken. Of him Scripture says: 'Have you found honey? Eat [only] as much as is sufficient for you, so that you do not become (over) filled with it, and vomit it.'[2] Acher cut down the young plants. Of him Scripture says: 'Do not allow your mouth to make your flesh sin.'[3] Rabbi Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace. Of him Scripture says: 'Draw me, we will run

after you.'[4]

Why Four Sages Entered Paradise

'Shaar Maamarei Razal', Masechet Chagigah, by Chaim Vital

This is a Luric Kabbalistic gloss on the Talmudic story of the four sages who entered Paradise.

Rabbi Chaim Vital explained:

> Four sages entered Paradise. They were Ben Azzai, and Ben Zoma, and Elisha Acher, and R. Akiva, etc.

Behold Adam, the first man, sinned that great sin[5] – the fruit of which we are still eating in this world, and it will not be rectified until the coming of the Messiah. These four sages were exceptional in wisdom and piety, as is well known. They engaged in mystical contemplation through the Holy Spirit and Merkabah Mysticism [*Maaseh Merkabah*], and the idea entered their minds to rectify the defect that had been caused through the sin of Adam, the first man, or at least to rectify those parts of the roots of their souls which were attached to Adam, the first man.

LIGHT

Hidden Light of Creation

'Zohar Chadash' Ia, Bereshit, Maamar Yehi Or

A central, recurring image of the Kabbalah is the hidden light of God which can be accessed by the mystic sage.

'Let there be light… And God saw the light that it was good.'[1]… when God foresaw that there would be generations of wicked people who were not worthy of this light, He hid it.… For whom did he hide it? For the righteous.

More on the Hidden Light of Creation

‘Zohar’ 1:30b, Bereshit

An expansion of the theme of the hidden divine light, underlying all reality, and available to the mystics who can uncover it.

Originally everything was included in the earth in a hidden manner and was not revealed. There was power, strength and frozen water, which did not flow. All these did not spread forth until a heavenly light shone upon the earth. This light struck against the earthly absorbing substance and its energy was released, as it is written ‘And God said: Let there be light, and there was light’;[2] that was the primordial, supernal and preexistent light. From here all powers and forces emerged, and the earth was given its fragrance so that afterwards it brought out its own power. As the light shone and descended, its illumination spread from one end of the world to the other. When God saw the wicked in the world, He hid and covered the light, and it can only emerge through paths which are veiled and not revealed.

Hidden Light Revealed and Concealed

‘Zohar’ 1:31b, Bereshit

The divine light was revealed and hidden at different moments in biblical history.

‘And God said: Let there be light, and there was light.’[1] This is the light [*Chesed*] that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in the beginning; it is the light of the eyes. This is the light which the Holy One showed to Adam, the first man, through which he could see from one end of the world to the other. This is the light that the Holy One showed to David, who praised God and said: ‘How great is Your goodness which You have hidden away for those that fear You.’[2] This is the light that the Holy One showed to Moses, through which he could see from Gilead to Dan.[3] When the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that three evil generations would arise, namely the generation of Enosh, the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Tower of Babel,[4] He hid the light away so they

would not use it. The Holy One, blessed be He,… returned this light to Moses when he stood at Mt Sinai to receive the Torah and he used it all his days. The Children of Israel were unable to approach him until he covered his face with a veil.[5]

LOCATION

Location and Revelation

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:124

Space and time are not merely neutral phenomena: some partake of the holy and some of the demonic. Here is the power of special places for the mystic.

I have heard it said in Rebbe Nachman of Breslav's name:

Sometimes thoughts of repentance and yearning for God, may He be blessed, come to a person in a particular place. It is necessary to strengthen oneself there, specifically in that particular place, with the thought of repentance and longing. For example, one should speak some words of supplication or entreaty to God there, or words of yearning with one's mouth and one's heart, according to the subject matter. One must not wait or move from such a place, even though this place is not suitable; for instance it is not a place fixed for Torah or prayers, but simply on the road or a similar place. For when one moves from the place, it is possible that there will be an interruption of these holy thoughts.

We have also seen this happening several times with Rebbe Nachman himself, may his memory be for a blessing. Sometimes he would remain standing in the middle of the house and speak to us and reveal to us wonderful Torah teachings and very beautiful dialogue. He revealed wonderful ways in the service of God, may He be blessed, and great spiritual awakening, etc., but he did not want to move from his place until he had finished what he required to say. This happened a number of times.

Torah Is the Map of the World

‘Tzidkat Hatzaddik’ 90

The dynamic relationship between the Torah and the People of Israel is one of continual renewal, leading to a renewal of the world itself.

The Torah is a map of the world, as they [the Sages] say in the parable of the architectural plans and diagrams.[1] The same is true of the People of Israel, for it is known that they and the Torah are one, because the light of the souls of Israel is itself the light of the Torah. This is an idea referred to in the Zohar,[2] where it says that there are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah [and six hundred thousand souls of Israel]. Thus in each generation they are a map of the world in that generation. Like the renewal of the souls of Israel in every generation, so the world renews itself in that generation. As our Sages have said, ‘Even ships, etc., for Israel’s sake.’[3] Just as the souls change from generation to generation, the same is true of the Torah, that is the Oral Torah which renews itself with new ideas by means of the Sages of Israel. Through all these new ideas of the Oral Torah new souls of Israel emerge, through whom new things happen in the world. From the condition of the world in each generation we can contemplate [or understand] the condition of the souls of Israel in that generation, and also [contemplate] the condition of the Torah that is in the mouths of the true sages [*talmidei chakhamim*] of that generation.

DIVINE CONTRACTION (*TZIMTZUM*)

How *Tzimtzum* Came About

‘Etz Chaim’, shaar 1, anaf 2

The withdrawal of God in the Creation to make space for the world (tzimtzum) *was a very powerful Kabbalistic image explicated in different ways.*

At the beginning of everything all of existence was an undifferentiated light, known as the light of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*], blessed be He. There was no vacant region or empty expanse, but everything was the light of the Infinite Godhead. When

it was His will, He began to emanate the emanations and to create created beings. The reason was in order for God to be called merciful and gracious, etc., and if there was no one in the world to receive His mercy from Him how could He be called merciful?

… Behold He contracted [*tzimtzem*] His essence in the midst of His light in the central innermost point [withdrawing it] to the surrounds and to the sides, and between them[1] a vacant region remained. This was the first contraction [*tzimtzum*] of the Celestial Emanator. The vacant region was circular, equidistant on all sides so that the world of emanation and all the worlds were located inside this circle, and the light of the Infinite Godhead surrounded it in equal measure. And behold when He contracted Himself, then on one side of the vacant space He drew forth through a thin straight line, like a cylinder, a single light that was drawn forth from the Infinite Godhead to the midst of the vacant region and filled it. There remained, however, an empty area between the light inside the vacant region and between the light of the Infinite Godhead that surrounds the vacant region. For without it things would return to what they were, and this light inside the vacant region would return and rejoin the Infinite Godhead as it was before. Therefore, the light did not spread out and was not drawn in a wide manner into the vacant region. Rather it was only through a single thin line, and through this line the light of the Infinite Godhead was drawn and descended into the midst of the circular vacant region which had been emanated. Through this the Emanator is bound together with what has been emanated.

Tzimtzum, Like a Father to His Infant Child

'Maggid Devarav LeYaakov (Likkutei Amarim)', section 1, p. 5a

The Chasidic Kabbalists gave traditional mystical teachings a more human dimension. They saw the purpose of the Creation was so that righteous people could emerge, and so, as it were, to give them space God withdrew from the world to give righteousness the possibility to flourish.

Our Sages have said that 'Israel was the first thought in God's mind at the Creation.'[1] The primordial will of God was that there would be righteous ones of Israel in each generation. So, as it were, God

contracted [*tzimtzem*] and withdrew His clear light, like a father who contracts his intelligence and who speaks childish words to his little child. All the qualities of childishness are expressed by the father, who uses these childish expressions to give his child joy and glories in them. For the Holy One the past and the future are the same, and He gains pleasure from the deeds of the righteous, so the Holy One contracted Himself. This contraction [*tzimtzum*] is called Wisdom, for Wisdom comes from Nothingness [*Ein Sof*], as it says: 'And Wisdom may be found from Nothing.'[2] The contraction is for Israel, and also the contraction was caused by love.

Tzimtzum and Faith

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:64:1–2

The following is a profound Chasidic teaching about the paradoxical nature of the world and of God, and about the role of doubt and faith in mystical theology.

God, may He be blessed, out of His compassion created the world, for He wanted to express His compassion, and if there were no creation of the world, to whom could He show His compassion. Therefore He created all of reality from the highest level of emanation down to the end of the central point of the physical world, in order to show His compassion.

When God wanted to create the world there was no place to create it because everything was the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*]. Therefore He contracted [*tzimtzum*] the divine light, [withdrawing it] to the sides, and through this withdrawal a vacant region was made. In this vacant region all of space and time,[1] which constitute the creation of the world, came into being. This vacant region is therefore a necessary condition of the creation of the world. For without it there would be no place for the creation of the world.

This contraction leading to a vacant region is impossible to understand or to grasp, except in the future Messianic Age, for one has to affirm two contradictory things about it: both that it is and that it is not. For the vacant region came about through contraction. God, as it were, removed Himself by withdrawal from it and there is no divinity there, otherwise it would not be empty and

everything would still be the Infinite Godhead, and there would be no place for the Creation. The truth is, however, that despite everything there is indeed divinity in the vacant region, for there is nothing which exists without the life force of God. Therefore it is impossible to grasp the idea of the vacant region at all.

You should know that there are two kinds of heresy. There is heresy that comes from secular wisdom, concerning which it is said that 'One should know what to reply to a heretic.'[1] This kind of heresy has a valid response to it, since it comes from secular wisdom which is based on the extraneous material in the world left over from the Breaking of the Vessels [*shevirat ha-kelim*]. At the Creation, through the greatness of the divine light, the vessels holding the light broke, and from there the Shells [*kelippot*], which entrap the light, were formed. Secular wisdom comes from there, that is from the broken vessels, from the extraneous waste material of holiness… Similarly, magic comes from extraneous material and waste matter.

Although one should certainly flee and escape from this kind of heresy, nevertheless someone who falls into it can find an escape route to get away from there. For it is possible to find God there, if one seeks Him out and searches for Him. Since secular wisdom comes from the Breaking of the Vessels, there are various sparks [*nitzotzot*] of holiness and various letters which were broken and fell there, as is known. Therefore, one is able to find both divinity and intellect there to resolve the problems of this heresy that come from secular wisdom, which in turn comes from the extraneous matter of the Breaking of the Vessels. For the divine life force, that is the intellect and letters which were broken and fell, is there. Thus this type of heresy is amenable to a reply, and that is why it is said: 'You should know what to reply to a heretic.'

There is, however, a different type of heresy which involves wisdom which is no wisdom, but since it is deep and we are unable to grasp it, it seems like genuine wisdom… Thus there are a number of perplexities and problems which are raised by thinkers, that are not really wisdom at all, and the problems are not real problems. Since, however, it is not within the ability of the human mind to resolve them, therefore, they appear as wisdom and genuine problems. In truth, however, it is impossible to resolve these problems. For the problems generated by this kind of heresy come

from the vacant region itself, where, as it were, there is no divinity…

Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to find answers to these problems, which come from the perspective of the vacant region, that is one cannot find God there. For if one were able to find God there, then it would not actually be vacant, and everything would be identical with the Godhead as mentioned before. Concerning this kind of heresy it is said, 'All those who come to it will not return.'[1] For there is no answer to this heresy, since it comes from the vacant region from where God has contracted [and withdrawn] his divinity, as it were. Only the People of Israel through its faith is able to transcend all wisdom, and even to transcend this heresy which comes from the vacant region. For they believe in God without any rational investigation and wisdom, only with perfect faith. God fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds, so that we find that He is, as it were, inside all worlds and surrounding all worlds. Now there has to be a separation between this 'filling' and 'surrounding', for if not everything would be one. This separation is represented by the vacant region… Thus we find that the vacant region surrounds all that is, and God, who surrounds all worlds, also surrounds the vacant region. Therefore, one can assert that God fills all worlds and also surrounds all worlds, that is He also surrounds the vacant region. In the middle the vacant region separates the two aspects of God because, as it were, He contracted [and withdrew] His divinity from there.

Behold, it is through faith that this paradox is resolved. For faith maintains that God fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds, and since He surrounds all worlds, then the vacant region itself came into being through His wisdom, and certainly in very truth God is also there. Only it is impossible to grasp this and to find God there….

Therefore the People of Israel are able to transcend all wisdoms, problems and heresies which come from the vacant region since they know for certain that it is impossible to find a genuine response to them. For if one could find a response to them, one would find God in them, and there would not be a vacant region and it would be impossible for the created world to come into being.

In reality, however, there certainly is a response to them, and

certainly God is indeed there. Through rational investigation we sink and become entrapped there, for it is impossible to find God there.… Only we must simply believe that God also surrounds the vacant region and certainly in truth His divinity is there. Therefore, the People of Israel are called Hebrews,[1] since they transcend all wisdom through their faith, even wisdom which is no wisdom, namely the type of heresy which comes from the vacant region….

Therefore it is necessary to be very careful about this second type of heresy, to flee and to escape from there, not to investigate it or look into its words at all, for, God forbid, one would certainly sink and be entrapped there. It is said about it, 'All those who come to it will not return.'

Tzimtzum as God Hiding Himself

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:33:2

The self-contraction of God is seen by Chasidic mystics as reflecting not so much the state of the universe at Creation but of man's relationship to a hidden God.

A person should know that 'His glory fills the whole world'[2] and there is no place unoccupied by God. He fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds. Even a person who engages in business dealings with heathens cannot excuse himself by saying that he cannot serve God because of the coarseness and corporeality which continuously affects him, given the nature of his undertakings with the heathens at all times. For our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, have already revealed to us that in all physical matters and in all the Gentile languages, one can find God there. For without God they would have no life or existence at all.… Except that this life force and the divinity there is greatly contracted [from *tzimtzum*] and reduced just to the level of providing a sustaining life force and no more. For the Holy One, blessed be He, contracted His divinity in many and various contractions, from the beginning of thought to the centre point of the physical world where the domain of the Shells [*Kelippot*] is.

The more that divinity descended and contracted downwards, the more it was clothed in many types of clothing. This is what was

revealed by our Sages, and they opened a door to us so that the enlightened person would know and understand that all physical things have divinity and life force in them.… This idea is mentioned in the Palestinian Talmud:

> If a person asks you 'Where is your God?', you should answer him 'In the great city of Rome'.[1]

We thus find that the person who asks 'Where is your God?' is certainly submerged in the domain of the Shells, for he has excluded himself from the community and denied a principle of faith. He said: 'Where is your God?', and it seemed to him that in his own place God was absent. Therefore, one must say to him:

> Even in your place, where you are submerged in the domain of the Shells, there also you can find His divinity, for He enlivens everything.… From there you can attach yourself to Him, may He be blessed, and return to Him in perfect repentance. For this is not far from you,[2] but in your place the garments enveloping God are very many.

The more that a person goes from level to level the nearer he draws to God, and he is able to know God with great understanding. Because the higher the level achieved, the more the clothing surrounding God is diminished, and the more the divine self-contraction is diminished. Then a person can draw near to God and is able to love himself, as well as to love God with great love.

Tzimtzum, Yet No Place Empty of Him

'Meshivat Nefesh' 10, ed. Alter of Teplyk

The sense of God's presence for the mystic qualifies divine transcendence as expressed in the doctrine of tzimtzum. *To find Him one has to delve behind the clothing which hides the divine in Its contraction, as here from the teachings of Nachman of Breslav.*

One needs to know that God's glory fills the whole earth and there is no place empty of Him. He fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds. Even a person who is engaged in business dealings with

Gentiles is not able to exclude himself by saying that he does not want to serve God because of the coarseness and physicality which falls on him always because of his continuous involvement with them. For in all physical things and in all languages of the Gentiles one can find His divinity. Without His divinity they would have no life and existence at all. The only limitation is that the lower the level the greater the contraction [*tzimtzum*] of His divinity there, and the more it is clothed in layers of clothing.

CHAPTER 3
ANGELS

ANGELOLOGY

Invoking Angels and Demons

'Sefer Chasidim' 205, by Judah Hechasid

Angels and demons represent powers of good and evil, and Practical Kabbalah involved the use of these powers, but the practice was opposed by many mainstream Kabbalists who pointed out its dangers.

Anyone who engages in conjuring up angels or demons by oaths, or by magical formulae, his end will not be good. He will see evil in his own body or in his children, all his days. Therefore a man should keep far away from doing any of this. He should also avoid asking questions in dreams in order to know which woman to marry, or whether a certain thing will always be successful or not… For in the end there is no remedy for this. Many people did engage in this kind of activity and many did ask dream questions. Some of them became impoverished, or they abandoned their faith, or they or their children fell seriously ill. One should not ask others to do these things for one. The only really beneficial thing to do is to pray to the Holy One, blessed be He.

If a person is setting out on a journey he should not conjure up angels to guard him on the way, rather he should pray to the Holy One for all his needs. For He is merciful and gracious and will reconsider any evil which is in store.

A number of prophets were killed but they did not conjure up the Holy [divine] name.[1] Rather they stood in prayer. They said that if God does not respond to our prayers we will know that we are not worthy to be saved. Yet they only engaged in prayer.

Angels and the Human Soul

'Etz Chaim', shaar 26, anaf 1

Because of the belief of Kabbalists in hidden worlds beyond the mundane, the roles of angels and demons play a major part in the structure of reality. One of the issues associated with angels is how different they are from humans.

The reason that the higher soul [*neshamah*] descends into this world is to rectify [from *tikkun*] it, just like the exile of the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*], and to separate out [from *berur*] the sparks that fell. You should know that there are angels who are greater than the soul, as well as angels of lesser status than the soul, and these [greater] angels do not have a physical aspect like humans, for they do not clothe themselves in a body.… The angels that accompany man, however, are of lesser status than he. For man himself is made up of form, and the angels which accompany him are the 613 organs[2] of the [divine] image [*tzelem*] [within him], as servants and as a base [*merkabah*] for him. We thus find that angels are a base for a person, and these angels are lesser than men. The angels which are the base for the Holy One, blessed be He, are higher than man.

Formation of Angels

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 1, by Chaim Vital

Angels are spiritual forces on the side of good. Some angels are produced by humans through religious activities, and are able to aid man. If angels suffer from imperfections this reflects the imperfections of their human makers.

Know that when a man is righteous and pious, engages in Torah and prays with the right intention it is certain that this is not a thing of no consequence[:]… Angels are created and holy spirits are established. In general from the speech of a man good or bad angels are created, according to his deeds. For from the Torah which a person engages in, and which he reads for the sake of heaven, an angel will be created, very holy and very celestial, and faithful in all

its words in perfect truth. Similarly if he reads from the Torah without errors and mistakes, the angel will be without errors and will be faithful in all its words. The same is true about a commandment [*mitzvah*] which a person performs. If it is correct a very holy angel is made from it. If there is something missing from that commandment, there will be a corresponding deficiency in the light of that angel. It is certain, however, that the power of the angel made through engagement with study of Torah is greater than the angel that is made from performing a commandment. All of these angels are adapted to mankind and inform people of future things and of secrets, enabling them to read books of daemons. For they are created from man's involvement with Torah and commandments. There are people to whom these daemon spirits do not reveal themselves at all, and there are those to whom they do reveal themselves; everything depends on the status of their souls or according to their deeds. There are completely true daemons, made from Torah or from commandments, and there are daemons who tell lies in some of the things they say, for they have in them a mixture of lies and falsehood. The reason is that if a man has a bad approach, or something false in the Torah he studied, or in the commandment he performed, behold the angel that is created from this is made up from good and bad. The good aspect in him speaks words of truth and the bad aspect in him speaks lying words.

Angels and Men

'Etz Chaim', shaar 39, derush 4

The distinction between men and angels occupied Kabbalists, and is traced back to its origins.

Why does a human soul need to clothe itself in a body, while the soul of an angel does not need to clothe itself in a body like the souls of humans? The reason is that the soul of an angel comes only from the upper spiritual sexual union[1] which is called [the union of] the kiss. Therefore, it does not need to clothe itself in a body. The soul of a human, however, comes from the lower physical sexual union, and therefore, it needs to clothe itself in a body in this world. This then is the reason that the souls of the angels, coming from the divine sexual union of the kiss which is a complete

supernal spiritual union, do not need a body. The supernal spiritual union, however, is not sufficient to bring the human soul into existence, and so it needs to be brought into existence by the lower physical union. It needs to be clothed in a body, and rectified through the commandments and good deeds which the body itself performs. That is why the Sages say, 'There is no word uttered by the Holy One, blessed be He, that does not form an angel.'[2] These angels are called sounds, and this is the explanation of the verse, 'All the people saw the sounds.'[3]

Angels Punishing the Wicked

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:20:7–8

For the Kabbalists the divine teaching of Torah contained in the Bible and in Jewish tradition is at the heart of reality and is a blueprint of the world. The good forces, the angels, are renewed by human creativity in understanding of Torah, and they are instrumental in eliminating evil.

And know that through finding new meaning in the Torah spiritual forces are created from the letters of the Torah. These forces are literally angels. They receive power from Edom[1] which enables them to punish the wicked with the sword and death… These spiritual powers, namely the angels, come about because of the renewal of the Torah through new interpretations. The renewal of the Torah relates to the holiness which is added above. According to the increase in holiness so an increase in Torah is drawn down. According to this increase in Torah so there is an increase in the number of angels. The contrary is also true. Sometimes the holiness is so little that the angels that are created through the renewal of the Torah have diminished power. They do not have the ability to receive the power to punish the wicked with the sword and death. They only have the power to suppress the wicked and to bring fear into their hearts, but not to punish them with the sword and to remove them.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Guardian Angels, Healing and Sin

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 1:57:1

Angels are in charge of running the everyday world. Here their responsibility for healing is explained.

Know that from each word that emanated from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, an angel was created.[1] And each and every word is split up into many sparks as expressed by the verse, ‘As a hammer splits a rock’.[2] Similarly many angels are created according to the multitude of sparks. The word that encompasses all the sparks creates an angel who is the prince and head of the angels which have been created by the sparks, and the lesser angels are its host. Each angel is in control of some matter. Even the trees and herbs have controlling angels over them. As our Sages have said: ‘There is no herb below which does not have an angel in control of it above.’[3] Each angel receives its life force from the divine word and in turn transmits this to the thing that it is in control of, that is to whichever herb or other thing that it controls.

These two powers, that is the power that the angel has to receive and the power to transmit, are reflected in his hands. With his right hand the angel receives its life force and with his left hand he transmits it. This is represented by the idea that the angel strikes the herb and says, ‘Grow’. This striking is symbolic of the left hand.

We find that all healing and medicines are dependent on the Torah[4] as expressed by the verse, ‘A healing for all his flesh’.[5] For the Torah gives power to the angels and the angels transmit it to herbs, and the herbs heal with the power of the Torah. For the person who is blemished in his faith in the Sages, and breaks down their religious fences,[1] there is no healing for his wounds… For the person who breaks their religious fence, through this he removes (power) from the hands of the angels according to the measure that he removes himself from the way of the Sages. This is what is meant by the verse, ‘Do not remove yourself from the thing that they tell you, neither to the right side nor to the left.’[2] Thus it depends upon the manner of his removing himself. If he removes himself from the way of the Sages to the right, he thus removes the right hand of the angel, which then does not have the power to receive [the divine life force]. If he removes himself to the left, he

thus removes the left hand of the angel, which then does not have the power to transmit [the divine life force]. When one hand of the angel is damaged, then that person will not find a cure, because the herb on which his cure depends has no power to heal him, for the angel cannot convey the divine life force to it.

THE ANGEL METATRON

Enoch and Metatron

'Targum Jonathan' (on Genesis 5:24)

That the angel Metatron is the transfigured biblical character Enoch is found in Rabbinic comments on Genesis 5:24: 'And Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him.' Although some Rabbis thought that 'God took him' is a euphemism for 'he died', the view favoured by the Kabbalists is that Enoch was taken alive into heaven. The latter is found in this Palestinian Targum, that is an Aramaic 'translation', now known as Pseudo-Jonathan.

And Enoch served God in truth, and he was not with those who dwell on earth, for he was drawn away and went up into heaven according to the word which was before the Lord. His name was called Metatron the Great Scribe.

Metatron and Samael

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Behaalotecha

Metatron, an angelic transformation of Enoch, has a major role in Kabbalah. Enoch and Elijah share a number of characteristics in common, including that neither died but went directly into heaven. In rather different ways they occupy the space between human and divine worlds and are a subject of fascination for Jewish mystics. Metatron represents the forces of good opposed to the demonic forces, including Samael.

The Good Inclination [*Yetzer Hatov*] and the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer*

Hara] are both supernal powers each of which is in control of many thousands of angels. To every individual person two angels from these are handed over, one from the host of the Good Inclination and one from the host of the Evil Inclination. The chief of all the good angels, which are called by the name of Good Inclination, is the angel Metatron. The chief of the host of the Evil Inclination is called the evil Samael.

Enoch's Journey

'Bachya ben Asher' (on Genesis 5:24)

Enoch, because of his righteousness, became an angel in heaven, a being whose physical nature was transformed into a being of light. He is a role model for the mystic. These three selections trace his ascent.

'And Enoch journeyed with God, and he was not, for God took him.'[1] The exalted condition of journeying is only mentioned with regard to the righteous. For instance with Enoch, Noah and Abraham. As indicated here concerning Enoch, it says, 'And Enoch journeyed'; and it is written concerning Noah, 'Noah journeyed with God'; and concerning Abraham it is written, 'Journey before Me'.[2] All of them grasped the journey of the sun and its great powers, which indicate the rule and elevated status of the Master of all things, may He be blessed.… Behold Enoch was attached to the higher light from which the lights on the fourth day[1] were created and drawn out.… This righteous man [*tzaddik*] was attached to them, for he found favour in the eyes of the Lord, and he was qualified for it…

For a long time he sought to know the angel Metatron and to grasp his manner of being, until the point arrived when he did grasp him and cleaved to him. Since he cleaved to him, his body and his name were changed. For his flesh was transformed into a brand of fire, and his name was called Metatron; for he who cleaves to something is called by the name of that thing that he cleaves to, because it is as if they were made into one.… This 'taking' [of Enoch by God][2] was a great and elevated reward, like which there is nothing comparable. From here there is a hint about the Garden of Eden, and the immortality of the soul which exists forever. This is also a great proof that if Adam had not sinned he would have

lived forever in both body and soul. We also find an expression of 'taking' with regard to Elijah as it is written 'If you see me taken from you'.[3]

Enoch and Adam in Heaven

'Zohar Chadash', Shir Hashirim, p. 69a–b

Enoch inherited the garment of holiness of Adam, the first man, before becoming a heavenly creature.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam the first man, He brought him to the Garden of Eden in a precious garment of the light of the Garden of Eden, and he was perfected through a spirit and a holy soul to be in a completely ideal condition.

He and his wife [Eve] were strolling in the Garden of Eden with heavenly angels round about them giving them pleasure with many joys and delights. They [the angels] opened up a treasure for him, and showed him all later generations, each and every generation, and he perceived upper forms and lower forms through the light of mystical vision which shone on them.

The harlot wife (Lilith) then descended with the one (Samael) who rides on her and controls her, who is heartless and seduces all things. They saw the supernal glory that Adam and his wife were in, so the harlot wife strengthened herself with the power and the strength of the one who controls her, and drew near to Eve. She began to seduce her with all manner of seductions and all manner of sweet language, until she was seduced. Afterwards she seduced Adam.

These garments [of light] flew away from him, and his soul, which was the brightness of the heavenly vision, departed from him, so that he was left completely naked, he and his wife. After he was expelled from the Garden of Eden and was established outside, he had thoughts of repentance, and the Holy One had mercy on him and made him other garments of a type that are needed for use in this world. After that he was active outside [the Garden of Eden] and gave birth to children.

Now that brightness of heavenly soul that flew away from him ascended above and was hidden away in a treasure trove… That is

until Adam gave birth to children and Enoch emerged into the world. Once Enoch came that heavenly brightness of a holy soul descended upon him, and Enoch was in that condition of greatness that Adam had left. That is why it says: 'And Enoch journeyed with God.'[1]

After that the Holy One needed to remove him from this world and to include together the holy spirit below and that above, and to include everything together with that holy spirit. That holy spirit is bound together from below and from above, to draw after it the whole world, every type after its type. Once it had been included together, it was made into a ruler of this world and of the world above. Every time that there are righteous and pious people in the world this binding together, which was effected from below by Enoch, is renewed… and the inheritance of that holy greatness descends into the world.

Metatron and Ruth

'Zohar Chadash', Midrash Ruth, p. 85b

Just as Enoch was chosen by God to become an angel, so humans can be called by Him to fulfil a special role, as exemplified by Ruth, a Moabite convert to Judaism and an ancestress of King David.

It is written 'Enoch journeyed with God, and he was not, for God took him.'[1] [God took him] out of this world of humans and drew Enoch little by little, until he was made into what he was, remaining in his [heavenly] place as was fitting for him, as the great and powerful Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, to bring out from himself power and holy crowns and to rule over them.

Upper and lower beings tremble before him, as do heavenly rulers and ministers who are close to him. In a similar manner the Holy One, blessed be He, drew Ruth after Himself, and took her from other peoples and brought her near to Him, to bring out from her holy multitudes and hosts.

CHAPTER 4
HOLY SCRIPTURES: BIBLE CHARACTERS AND THEMES

ABRAHAM

Abraham, Patriarchs and the *Merkabah*

'Midrash Genesis Rabbah', Bereshit 47:6

The biblical Patriarchs were seen by the Jewish mystics as the vehicles for the Divine Presence in the world. This idea was already found in Rabbinic texts, as in this Midrash.

Resh Lakish said: The Patriarchs themselves are the Chariot [*Merkabah*], as it says, 'And God departed from off Abraham', and 'And God departed from off him',[1] and 'And behold God stood upon him.'[2]

Abraham and the Tree of Life[3]

'Zohar' 1:102b, Vayera

Jewish teaching, as contained in the Torah, is seen as a rectification of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. The Torah is often called the Tree of Life. Here Jewish teaching is traced back to the Patriarch Abraham.

Abraham planted a tree wherever he lived, but it did not grow properly in every place, only when he lived in the land of Canaan. From that tree he could tell who was devoted to God and who was attached to idols. For someone who was devoted to God, the tree would spread out its branches and cover his head, forming a

suitable shade for him. For someone who was attached to idolatry, the tree would draw back and the branches rise straight up. Thus Abraham would know and warn him, and not move from there until the idolater would devote himself to faith in the Holy One, blessed be He. Similarly a person who was pure would be received by the tree, and a person who was impure would not be received. Thus Abraham would know and be able to purify the impure person with water, for there was a spring of water under that tree.[1]…

Even at the time that Abraham offered the three angels hospitality he said to them, 'Rest under this tree',[2] in order to see who they were and to test them. With that tree he tested everyone, and the secret of the matter is that the Holy One, blessed be He, is a Tree of Life to all people.… Come and see when Adam sinned, he sinned with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.… He sinned with it and brought death into the world. Thus it is written in the Bible:

> Now to prevent him putting out his hand and also taking from the Tree of Life to eat…[3]

When Abraham came he was able to rectify the world with the other tree, which is the Tree of Life, and make known the true faith to everyone in the world.

ADAM

Adam and His Mystical Book

'Zohar' 1:37b, Bereshit

The Kabbalists, while accepting the importance of the revelation of the Torah to Moses, believed that there was another earlier book containing an inner divine wisdom. Although this wisdom could be found by Kabbalistic insight in the Torah itself the other book had a more universal dimension, and implied that mystical knowledge was available to everyone. The following selections tell of the book of mysteries given to Adam.

Rabbi Abba said: There was a real book which was handed down to Adam, the First Man,[1] and through it he knew heavenly wisdom. This book eventually reached the 'sons of God', the sages of each generation. Anyone who merited studying it would know heavenly wisdom through it.… This book was brought down by the Master of Secrets [Raziel], and three angelic messengers were appointed to watch over it. At the time that Adam left the Garden of Eden he held on to this book, but when he came outside it flew away from him. He prayed and cried before his Lord, and they returned it to him as before. This was so that this wisdom should not depart from the sons of men, and they would try to know their Master.

The Book of Adam

'Zohar' i:55a-b, Bereshit

'This is the book of the generations of Adam'[2]… It was a real book. As we have learnt when Adam was in the Garden of Eden, the Holy One sent down a book through the holy angel Raziel, who is in charge of the holy celestial mysteries *[razei];* in it were engraved celestial inscriptions, holy wisdom and the 72 types[1] of wisdom that, when expounded, are the 670 inscriptions of heavenly mysteries. At the centre of the book are the inscriptions of wisdom that make known 1,500 keys, which are not even given to the holy celestial beings. All of them were sealed up in the book until it reached Adam. Once it reached him the heavenly angels gathered around him to gain knowledge and to listen to him.… At that time the holy angel Hadraniel[2] intimated to him saying:

> Adam, Adam, keep the glory of your Master concealed. For permission has not been given to celestial beings to know about the glory of your Master, it has only been given to you.

So that book remained hidden and secreted with him till Adam left the Garden of Eden. At first he would look into it every day attentively and use it to investigate the mysteries of his Master. Supernal secrets were revealed to him, which were not known to celestial beings. When Adam sinned and transgressed the command of his Master, however, the book flew away from him. Adam beat

his head, cried and entered the waters of Gihon right up to his neck.[3] The water pockmarked his body and disfigured his appearance. At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, signalled to Raphael and he returned the book to him. Adam would study it assiduously, and he passed it on to his son Seth. Thus it was handed on over the generations till it reached Abraham, who knew how to contemplate the glory of his Master through it.… Similarly the book was given to Enoch, and from it he contemplated the celestial glory.

Adam, Eve and *Kelippot*

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 1, by Chaim Vital

The reality of evil and the struggle for good are central to the Kabbalistic outlook. In line with the Bible account of Adam and Eve, this passage locates the duality of human nature, part good–part evil, to the sin of the first humans.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, the first man, he separated [*berur*] out those portions of the vital souls [*nefesh*], spirits [*ruach*] and higher souls [*neshamah*] that were intermingled with the evil of the seven kings.[1] He took them and made them into the soul of Adam, which incorporated all aspects. When Adam ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, however, he caused good to be intermingled with evil.

Thus the good of Adam, the first man, became intermingled with the evil of the Shells [*kelippot*], with Samael, with the male aspect of evil, Adam Belial. Similarly the good of Eve became intermingled with the evil of Lilith, the female aspect, which is the filth of the serpent which had sexual relations with Eve.

Adam and Souls Affected by Sin

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Toldot

The image of man with a lower and upper section, usually depicted as below and above the waist, is common to Rabbinic Judaism. Here is a Kabbalistic gloss, for the power of evil only affects those souls which belong to the feet of Adam, and not higher souls.

When Adam, the first man, sinned with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he caused the Serpent to inject his filth into Eve and into Adam himself. Then all the good and bad souls, those souls from the Shells [*Kelippot*] and those souls of holiness, were intermingled together. Behold the Serpent was not able to inject his filth and to bite except in the heel of Adam, as it is written 'You will bite his heel.'[1] This refers to the lower souls which are included in the heel of Adam. As is known Adam was made up from all souls, yet with the other higher souls that were included in the body of Adam, and how much more so those in his head, the Serpent was not able to have any effect.

Adam's Expulsion from Eden

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Ekev

The duality between spirit and matter, common to Kabbalah, is here exemplified in the interpretation of Adam's expulsion from Eden.

In the beginning Adam, the first man, was a spiritual being and his aura shone. Afterwards his nature became material and he was made into ugly physical matter; therefore, he was not able to remain in the spiritual garden of Eden and was driven out from there.

Adam Truly Knew God

'Nefesh Hachaim' 4:28

Although the Torah was given by God to Moses and the Israelites, its inner meaning was made available to Adam. But after Adam's sin, insight into its mysteries became obscured, and though they can be uncovered by Torah study, it is not possible to achieve fully the original spiritual discernment of Adam until the Messianic age.

It is frequently mentioned in the Zohar that the Torah is both hidden and revealed. It is apparent to anyone who understands that the explanation of this is that there is a secret meaning to the holy Torah that is not written down explicitly or explained in it.

Rather these subjects are secret and hidden, hinted at in its words. What is revealed in it is the simple meaning of Scripture, which is indeed written down explicitly and explained in it.…

Thus the Zohar text says, 'How beloved are the words of the Torah, in every word of which are heavenly secrets.'[1]

Each person contemplates the secrets of the inner depths of the Torah according to the extent of his wisdom, the purity of his intellect, the holiness of the purity of his heart and the extent of his involvement with, and reflection on, it.

The essential reasons of the Torah, however, which are the secret soul of its soul [*neshamah* of the *neshamah*] the mystery of its mysteries, are things which the Ancient of Days [God] has hidden and removed from His creatures. No human being knows them, as yet. The only exception being our first ances-tor,[2] who did achieve an insight into the soul of its soul, through which he contemplated the heavenly brightness, the soul of the soul of the holy Torah. Heavenly wisdoms were revealed to him in the form of their upper roots.

From the time that he sinned, the heavenly brightness was removed from him, and the upper configurations were confused and disordered. Heavenly pathways and conduits of the wisdom of the Torah, the mystery of the soul of its soul, were blocked up. This was also true in the holy assembly at the time of the reception[3] of the holy Torah, although the world was imbued with fragrance, so that the Sages have said that 'The stain which affected Israel was removed from them.'[4] Nevertheless they only grasped the inner depth of the soul of the Torah but not the aspect of the soul of the soul. This would have meant that a spirit from on high would have gushed forth, and He, may He be blessed, would have poured His spirit on to all flesh. Then the springs of wisdom, the wonderful pathways of upper wisdom, the soul of its soul, would have been revealed.

This is what the Zohar says:

> The Torah has a body, etc., foolish people in the world only look at the garment, etc.,… Wise people,… look only at the soul, which is the true essence of the Torah. In future times they will be summoned to contemplate the soul of the soul of the Torah.[1] As it is written, 'Your eyes will behold your Master, and your Master will hide Himself no more.'[2]

This refers to the light of the first day of the Creation, which was hidden for the righteous in future times.[3]

ELIJAH

The character of Elijah held a fascination for the Kabbalists because he, like Enoch, never died, but was taken up whole into heaven. He still comes back to men with teachings from heaven, and is regarded as the most direct source of new revelations to mystics.

Elijah and Covenant

'Zohar' 1:93a, Lech Lecha

Elijah returns to earth to participate in Jewish rituals.

Rabbi Abba said: When a man takes his son to initiate him in this covenant of circumcision, the Holy One, blessed be He, calls to his family of angels and says, 'See the creature I have made in the world.' At that time Elijah appears, traverses the world in four steps[4] and presents himself there. For this reason we have learnt that a person needs to prepare an extra chair in his honour, and to say 'This is the chair of Elijah', otherwise he will not stay there. [Afterwards] Elijah goes up to heaven and testifies before the Holy One.[5]

Come and see. At first it is written that God said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have forsaken Your Covenant.'[1] God said to him: 'By your life, in every place that my sons mark their flesh with this holy sign, you will be there, and the same mouth which testified that Israel had forsaken [the Covenant] will testify that Israel are keeping the Covenant.' We have also learnt that the reason why Elijah was punished before the Holy One, was because he brought accusations of misbehaviour against God's children.

Elijah in Heaven

‘Zohar’ 2:197a–b, Vayakhel

Elijah’s status as a human in heaven raised problems for Jewish mystics. Here is an attempt to explain how he could enter heaven, leave it and return.

‘Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.’[2] How was Elijah able to ascend into heaven? Surely all of heaven cannot tolerate even something as small as a mustard seed of the physical matter of this world? How, then, can you say, ‘and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven’?

This can be understood from what was said [about Moses]. It is written, ‘And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai’, and it is then written, ‘And Moses came into the midst of the cloud, and went up the mountain.’[3]… That is he went up inside the cloud. Just like a person wrapped in a garment, so he too wrapped himself in the cloud and ascended to God. In the cloud he was able to draw near to the fire [of the Lord]. In a similar way, Elijah,… ascended in that whirlwind and wrapped himself in it as in a garment. In this way he ascended.

The secret is found in the Book of Adam, the first man, where it says about future generations of the world:

> There will be one spirit which will come down to the earth, clothe itself in a body and will be called Elijah. In that body he will ascend to heaven and he will divest himself of that body and remain in the whirlwind. Another, luminous, body will be prepared for him, so that he will be among angels. Whenever he comes down to earth, he will clothe himself again in the material body, which remains in this world. It is in this body that he will make himself visible on earth, while it is in the other body that he will be seen on high.

… There was no other man whose spirit ascended to heaven and then descended to earth except Elijah, who did indeed ascend to heaven and then came down to earth.

Elijah and the Angel of Death

‘Zohar Chadash’, Midrash Ruth 76a

Elijah, the archetype of the Kabbalistic mystic, here overcomes death and ascends into heaven.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to bring Elijah up into heaven, the Angel of Death objected.[1] The Holy One said to him:

> It was because of this that I created the heavens, so that Elijah could ascend there.

The Angel of Death said to him: 'Master of the Universe, now people will have an excuse.'[2] The Holy One said to him:

> He is not like other creatures, you do not know his strength and he is able to remove you from the world.

He said to him: 'Master of the Universe, give me permission to descend to him.' He said to him: 'Descend.'

He immediately descended. When Elijah saw him, he forced the angel under his foot and sought to remove him from the world, but the Holy One did not give him permission.[1] At once Elijah subdued the Angel of Death under him, and ascended to heaven as it is written, 'And Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind.'[2]

Elijah and Revelation

'Zohar Chadash', Tikkunim Chadashim LeRashbi

The ultimate revelation of Elijah will take place in the era leading up to the Messianic age.

You, Elijah, will precede all prophets in the generation of the Messiah. There are those to whom you will reveal yourself in future through an aspect of their soul, by their intellect, and there are those to whom you will reveal yourself in future through their wisdom, and there are those to whom you will reveal yourself in future face to face, in their physical aspect.

Elijah, Enoch and the Patriarchs

‘Pardes Rimmonim’ 24:13

Great though Elijah was, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as humans were at a higher spiritual level.

It is fitting to ask about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were greater than Elijah and Enoch,[3] why did they not merit being angels too?

The answer is that the spiritual level of the Patriarchs was to be a Chariot [*Merkabah*] for the world of the *Sefirot*. If they had clothed themselves in any of the angelic spirits from among the angels, they would have descended to a lower spiritual level than their own level. For in their lives they were channels for the divine flow from the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*]. This is a more elevated level than that of Metatron, the head of the angelic princes, for when there is no righteous man in the world the Divine Presence clothes Herself in Metatron… If so we find that the level of the righteous, in so far as they are a Chariot, is greater than the level of the angels. Therefore, if the Patriarchs were to ascend to the level of the angels, their greatness would be lost.

If you ask why after their death, when they no longer had the status of a Chariot, was it not fitting that their bodies should have ascended to the level of angels. This is indeed no difficulty. For even after their death, when they were buried in the ground, they retained their spiritual level.

Elijah’s Identity as an Angel

‘Pardes Rimmonim’ 24:14

There was some dispute about the status of Elijah in heaven. Was he still a man or an angel?

With regard to Elijah there is disagreement among the Sages as to which tribe he came from.[1]… Some Kabbalists wanted to explain everything [about him] in terms of the mystery of soul impregnation. We do indeed find that there are those commentators who remark, along these lines, that Elijah was really Methuselah,[2] since we do not find anywhere the name of the father of Elijah, he is merely called ‘Elijah the Tishbite, a dweller in Gilead’.[3]… When

Elijah ascended into heaven in a whirlwind, his flesh was transformed to brands of fire. His body was left in the world of the spheres or in the world of the angels, and his spirit ascended to its place.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, wants to send him on an errand he descends, clothes himself, comes down to earth and performs his errand. Therefore, he can reveal himself to wise men, to those who have perfected themselves and to prophets.

They can speak to him because he has a physical side, which is the body, and when he leaves he abandons that body in its place and ascends.

Further, I have found in the name of Rabbi Moses de Leon, may his memory be for a blessing, concerning the question… of how Elijah went up to heaven which no other human did. [He remarked:] You should know that in the secrets of the Torah I have seen there a very wonderful secret. You will not find any reference to the father or mother of Elijah anywhere in Scripture.… They have said that Elijah had descended from heaven before this, and his name is known in the secrets of the Torah.

Further, after that he appeared to Sages in many places in many different forms.

Sometimes in the form of an Arabian merchant, sometimes like a horseman, sometimes like one of the great sages of the generation. His figure and appearance take many forms. Therefore, do not wonder about this matter because Elijah is at a much higher level than all other humans. If you ask how was it possible, all those years and all that time, that his figure and appearance was in the form of a man? For an angel only appears for an hour or a day and not more. They say that when God sought to create man, He said to the angels, 'Let us make man.'[1] They said to[2] Him, 'Master of the Universe! What is man that You should be mindful of him?'[3] God pointed His finger at them and burnt them up. He called to a second group of angels, and the same thing happened. Until He called to a certain angel and his followers, and God said to him: 'Let us make man.' The angel replied to Him, 'Master of the Universe, if it is good in your estimation, how much more so is it for me. If it is agreeable to you I will descend and serve man.'… Nevertheless, he did not descend at that time but rather at a later time, when he brought faith into the world that the Lord is God[4] during the time of[5] Ahab.

Shortly after he brought this faith into the world God raised him [back] to the upper heaven.

Elijah and Hidden Revelation

'Netzach Yisrael' 28, by Judah Loew of Prague

The more rational approach to the revelations of Elijah sees him placing words or ideas in a person's mind.

You should know that there are places in the world which are more fitting for the divine holy word [than others]. Especially the cave in which the holy Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai was hidden was fitting for this. There is no doubt that Elijah revealed himself to the holy Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai a number of times in the cave. This revelation of Elijah was there in the past and even now Elijah reveals himself there. There is no real difference whether the revelation to him was in a vision or the revelation to him was not in a vision. For many times Elijah imparts words to an individual, but the person does not know from where the words have come to him. It seems to him that the words are actually his own, but they are not. Rather they are the words of Elijah who has communicated these words to him.

Elijah and Messianic Revelation

'Meor Enayim', Vayetze (on Genesis 29:1)

Elijah's coming at the beginning of the Messianic Age is here given an existential interpretation, so that a Messianic consciousness is also possible in every era. Elijah is once again associated with human consciousness and knowledge.

> Behold I am sending to you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and fearful day of the Lord.[1]

Just before the coming of the Messiah, speedily in our days, there will be the good news brought by Elijah, and because of this there will be a broadening of the mind as it is written, 'The earth will be

full of the knowledge of the Lord.'[1]

In a similar way there is an aspect of this in every person of Israel at all times.…

Good news may come to a person at the time that he is studying, when he finds something very difficult which he has not yet intellectually resolved. If some new viewpoint emerges and he feels in his mind that a new idea has entered, this is called an aspect of Elijah. After that the earth is full of knowledge, for his knowledge is broadened, and he is full of liveliness.…

In truth an aspect of a real spark of Elijah has clothed itself within the man who relays good news. For it is Elijah who is the bringer of all good news in the world, only here he clothes himself in that individual who brings the good news. An aspect of Elijah has been in existence from the Six Days of Creation… Therefore, when someone has the opportunity to relate some good news, he strengthens himself to run and tell it, for his soul feels that aspect of Elijah and wishes to internalize it. Although people may not be aware of this feeling on a conscious level, the cosmic dimension [*mazal*] of their soul does see it.

If someone had real knowledge they would be able to begin to serve God through the aspect of Elijah that was enclothed in them. Then they would progress from one level to a higher level. A spark of Elijah even enters with the person who receives the good news, and his mind is also broadened. He too is easily able to cleave to the Creator, may He be blessed… This is called the coming of the great day of the Lord, for he has brought God inside him through this means. That is why in the verse 'Behold I am sending to you Elijah the prophet', the expression 'sending' is in the present tense. For this is continuously happening, to each person and at every time, that an aspect of Elijah is sent to a man of Israel before the coming of the Day of the Lord.

Elijah and Clandestine Revelation

'Tikkunei Zohar', Introduction, p. 1a, and 'Benayahu', by Joseph Chaim of Baghdad

Elijah has many guises, here he appears as words or thoughts in the mind. Rabbi Joseph Chaim comments on:

‘Permission is given to Elijah and all the souls of the [heavenly] academy to descend among them.’

> And those that are wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament.[1]

‘Those that are wise’, these words refer to Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai and his companions. ‘Will shine’ refers to when they gather together to compose this mystical work. Permission is given to them. It is also given to Elijah with them, and to all the souls of the heavenly academy to descend with them and to all the angels in a hidden way and in the way of the intellect.

The Cause of All [God] gives permission for all the holy names, all the Tetragrammaton form of names, and secondary names, to reveal hidden secrets to them, each name according to his own level. Permission is also given to the Ten *Sefirot* to reveal to them hidden secrets for which no permission is given for them to be revealed until the generation of the Messiah.

Benayahu Commentary

TO DESCEND AMONG THEM: The explanation is that… permission was given for Elijah, the souls and the angels to descend in the way of the intellect. To enclothe themselves in the intellect of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai and his colleagues who brought out from their mouths true secrets, as if they had learnt them from their teachers.[2]… It also says that permission was given to the holy names that they should shine into their intellects, and influence their minds to respond truly with secrets of the Torah which their ear had not heard.… Sometimes the revelation of Elijah, may his memory be for a blessing, also comes to a righteous man [*tzaddik*] by enclothing himself in his intellect. He then says something true by himself, as if his intellect told him this thing.

Elijah, Reincarnation and Impregnation

‘Maggid Mesharim’, Miketz, by Joseph Caro

The purpose of Elijah’s descent into the world was to spread the belief in one God, and he is here identified with the angel Metatron. Elisha was Elijah’s disciple, and later a major prophet.

[The daemon is speaking:]

The secret of Elijah is that he only came into this world to publicize the divinity of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the world. He was Metatron and because of this he did not have any parents, nor do we find that he married a wife or gave birth to any children. For he had no need of them. After that when he left this world his soul impregnated Elisha. For there is a distinction between impregnation and reincarnation. Impregnation is when one spirit rests on one individual. In this way of impregnation it is possible for two or three spirits to rest on one person.

Seeing Elijah While Waking

'Maggid Mesharim', Introduction

Asceticism and a holy life are a precondition for meeting with Elijah and receiving mystical teachings from him.

After that slumber fell upon me and I slept for about half an hour. I awoke troubled by the fact that he [the daemon *maggid*] had not spoken to me at length, as he did from time to time. I returned to chant the Mishnah[1] texts, and I had only managed to chant two chapters, when the voice of my beloved sounded[2] within my mouth and said:

> Although you thought that I had left you and abandoned you, do not think this. For I will not leave you until I have done what I spoke to you.[3] I will not hold back all kinds of good from your mouth. Only you should cleave to me and to my awe, as I have mentioned to you. Thus you will ascend, be uplifted and go up before the whole of the Heavenly Academy. For they all send you greetings, because you are continuously involved with the Torah and with *halakhic* texts, and you unite them. You also practise asceticism, as I have told you, in order that you should merit seeing Elijah face to face while in a waking state, and that he should talk to you directly.[4] He will greet you[5] and be your master and teacher, in order to teach you all the secrets of the Torah. Therefore open your eyes and focus all your thoughts to serve me and be in awe of me, limit your eating and do not drink wine except for one cup each evening, and only then when it is greatly diluted.[6] Do not eat meat more than once or twice a week, and even then in small quantities.… Your thought and reflection should be on my Torah. Even at the time of eating you should think about my Mishnah texts, and consider your eating as a sacrifice and offering before the Holy One, blessed be He.

Elijah's Revelations

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 28

This is a remarkable Chasidic reinterpretation of the revelation of Elijah.

A Chasid told his father… that he wanted to see Elijah. In the end the father said to him that when one believes that God's kingdom rules over everything, and there is no place empty of His presence, that itself is a revelation of Elijah.

Elijah's Revelation a Gift

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 28

Though Elijah may come to a person, his revelation should not be sought because it is a gift from heaven.

A person should not seek levels and attainments even in the matter of the service of God. That is one should not seek an achievement of the Holy Spirit and a revelation of Elijah and similar matters. Only if they honour him from heaven with a certain level of spiritual attainment, he should give thanks to God for His goodness. He should not seek greatness, however, but only serve God in love, in awe and in wholeheartedness. He should be like a son who makes an effort for his father and mother, whom he loves more than himself. If he thinks that he is fitting for spiritual attainments, then God forbid, his own achievements will be subject to critical scrutiny and his defects will be revealed. Therefore, a person should not desire this.

He should only hope in the Lord, and do good. That is what has been commanded by the Torah to do. This is not true of attaining the Holy Spirit and the revelation of Elijah and similar matters, for we are not commanded about this in the commandments of the Torah. Only in this a person is honoured from heaven, and one is bound to give thanks to God for the loving kindness that he has graced us with such a free gift.

Elijah and Hospitality

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 38

Elijah also comes to test humans.

A wonderful story is told of Reb Eliezer, the father of the Besht,[1] may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing. One time his good deeds were greatly praised in heaven, so they decided to test him. They said who will go to test him? To which Samael replied, 'I will go.' Elijah the Prophet retorted, 'It is not good for you to go, I will go instead.'

So Elijah went to him on the afternoon of the Sabbath day, dressed as a poor man, carrying a walking stick and a purse. Reb Eliezer came to him and greeted him with the words 'Good Shabbes',[2] as was his usual way, although he could well have driven the stranger away as someone who was breaking the Sabbath. Yet Reb Eliezer was a tolerant man and did not want to put him to shame. So at once he gave him the Third Sabbath Meal,[3] and also the Melaveh Malkah[4] meal that night, to eat. He fed him again on Sunday morning.

He also gave him a present and did not mention anything about the desecration of the Sabbath, so as not to put him to shame. When Elijah saw his good behaviour, he revealed himself to him and said:

'Know that I am Elijah the Prophet and I came to test you. As a reward you will merit having a son who will illuminate the eyes of the Children of Israel.' Reb Eliezer did indeed merit having a son, the Besht.

Memory and Elijah

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 46

Elijah plays a role in Practical Kabbalah, a popular form of white magic.

I have heard that everyone who mentions the prophet Elijah's name fifty-two times, which is the numerical value of Elijah,[1] will be successful in his studies. There are those who are careful to do this on Saturday night [*Motzei Shabbat*];[2] therefore, they recite

hymns that mention Elijah on Saturday night. We pray every night before going to sleep, and then we remember the name of Elijah the Prophet seventy-two times.[3] It is good each time to have in one's mind a Holy Name. One should be careful to lie down in a clean place, with clean clothes; this is a well-tested technique and a person with insight will understand this. Happy is the person who sees Elijah's face in a dream. Happy is the person who is greeted by him, and returns the greeting.

ENOCH

Mystic Book of Enoch

'Zohar', Tosefet 2, Shemot, p. 277a–b

Enoch, like Elijah, is a subject of mystical interest because of his transformation into a heavenly being called Metatron. Here he is described as a man of wisdom, taught by angels, and when he internalized the divine wisdom, he became an angel.

From the awe with which Enoch walked in truth on the earth, he found the light which Adam, the first man, had lost.… It had been lost through Adam's sin. So it descended below and hid among the trees of the Garden, and spread out there on all sides of the Garden until Enoch the son of Jared was born.

When he was born… this light began to shine within him. He grew with the greatness of holiness, and when this light rested upon him it sparkled.… Celestial angels came as messengers and taught him heavenly wisdom. They gave him a book which had been hidden in the Tree of Life, and he learnt from it and knew the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He. He followed after Him, as it is written, 'And Enoch walked with God',[1] until that light was perfected in him.… One day Enoch came up into the Garden of Eden and they showed him the hidden things in the Garden, and he placed the book and all that he had seen, outside of it [the Garden of Eden]. It is hidden among the fellowship of mystics.…

'And he was not, for God took him.'[2] Enoch was not in this world; he was not as he was before in this world. For God took him into a

different life form, in which he was a perpetual youth[3]… to guide all worlds.… In Enoch the form of the hidden world was included. He is the throne of his Master, performing tasks in the world.

When the world is being judged, he is transformed and is called Metatron, Lord of all the upper hosts. The old man becomes a youth. He ascends from world to world and the anger is calmed.

Enoch's Dual Nature as Metatron

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 19

The theory of the dual nature of the soul of righteous people, existing on earth and in heaven at the same time, is used here to explain how Enoch is also the angel Metatron.

There is one very powerful question which exists for the true Wise Men,[4] which needs to be explained. Namely how can we say that Enoch is Metatron? If so when Enoch was alive in this world, who was the Angelic Prince of the World? The subject may be explained,[1] however,… that every righteous man has two spirits, one below and one above. This is the secret meaning of 'Abraham, Abraham', and 'Moses, Moses'.[2] That spirit that was above then was the Angelic Prince of the World and is also called Metatron. Afterwards that spirit which he had below[3] ascended and joined the upper one.

MOSES

Moses and His Knowledge

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh', Introduction

Moses was the greatest of the prophets, and the role model for Kabbalists because of his attachment to God.

The soul of Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him, grasped all the 600,000 interpretations of the Torah. As our Sages say, he [Moses] even knew everything that a mature student would innovate in the

future.[4] The reason for this is that his soul incorporated all the 600,000 souls of Israel, and the Torah is the root of the souls of Israel.

Ascension of Moses

'Arba Meot Shekel Kesef' 68

Moses the ideal Kabbalist was able to ascend into heaven.

Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him, ascended into heaven both in body and soul.

Moses and God's Back

'Etz Hadaat', Tisa, by Chaim Vital

Moses, although the greatest of the prophets, was still limited in his perception of the divine.

'And he [Moses] said: "Please show me Your glory."… And He [God] said: "I will pass all my goodness before you.… You cannot see My face, for no man can see My face and live… So you will see My back but My face will not be seen."'[1]

Behold Moses asked quite justly, since he had found favour in God's eyes more than other creatures because of his deeds.… If so why should he be put on a par with others? Just because they cannot see God's face, so why should he not see with the eyes of flesh, since his body was more pure than all other bodies? It was fitting, however, that he should merit seeing His glory. Yet it says: 'You will see my back.'

The explanation is that the aspect of the back is an aspect which is called the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] of His power, may He be blessed. This is a level which is called the Holy Spirit [Ruach Ha-kodesh], and it is this which is revealed to the righteous when they die… The aspect of the 'face' itself does not appear at all even when they die, until they are actually in the Garden of Eden. This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him:

You cannot see my face. For even the aspect of My back no righteous person

at all has seen me while alive.

That is to say that only specifically at the time when they die.

So how can you desire to ascend so many levels to see my face itself while you are still living in this world? Now it is sufficient for you that you should have attained a level above all the prophets and that is the aspect of the back that no creature is able to see except at the time of their demise. So you have seen My back now while you are alive, but not the aspect of [My] face. It should be sufficient for you that your body will see, with the eyes of flesh, that which has not been shown to any of the righteous.

PSALMS

Psalms and Personal Experience

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:125

This example of the existential interpretation of the Bible, here Psalms, is characteristic of the Chasidic response to ancient texts.

Concerning the recitation of Psalms Rebbe Nachman [of Breslav] told someone that the essential part of reciting the Psalms is to say each psalm about oneself. To find oneself inside each and every psalm. The man asked him how this could be done. Our Rebbe, may his memory be for a blessing, explained it to him a little. All of the battles, for which King David,[1] peace be upon him, sought that God would save him from them, need to be interpreted about oneself, about the battle with one's evil inclination and its forces. Similarly with other psalms.

He asked him how one can interpret some of the verses as referring to oneself, for instance those where King David praises himself, in words such as 'Guard my soul for I am pious',[2] and similar things. He replied to him that one needs also to interpret this about oneself. For one needs to judge oneself in the scale of merit, to find in oneself some merit and some good point, and through the aspect of this good point one is indeed pious.

CHAPTER 5
NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL WORLDS

ALPHABET AND THE POTENCY OF LANGUAGE

Anthropomorphism and Letters

'Etz Chaim', shaar 1, anaf 4

The spiritual world is of a totally different nature from human experience. For the mystics language itself and even the Hebrew letters are a symbolic reflection of that spiritual world of light.

It is well known that in the supernal world there are no bodies nor any bodily powers, heaven forbid. All the images and forms which are talked about there do not mean that things are actually like that. Their purpose is to make the language intelligible, so that people can understand these supernal spiritual matters which cannot be grasped and absorbed by the human intellect. Therefore, permission is given to talk about forms and images as one finds done throughout the Zohar.

This is also true of the verses of Scripture itself, which all reflect this idea in such verses as 'The eyes of the Lord which rove throughout the earth', 'The eyes of the Lord are directed towards the righteous', 'And the Lord heard', 'And the Lord smelled', 'And the Lord spoke',[1] and many similar things. The most distinctive of them all is what is written in Scripture, 'God created man in His own image, He created him in the image of God male and female.'[1] If the Torah itself spoke in this way, then we too can talk in a similar manner.

This is true despite its being obvious that in the world above

there is nothing except very fine lights, which are of an ultimate spiritual nature. These cannot be grasped at all, as the verse says: 'For you have not seen any form',[2] and similar expressions like that. There is, however, another way to make supernal things accessible and to give them pictorial form and that is to use the written form of the Hebrew letters as symbols.

For every single letter symbolizes an individual supernal light. That these are merely symbolic forms is obvious because above there are no letters and there is no spatial point. All of this is by way of allegory and images to make things intelligible….

Whether the pictures used are in the form of human language or in the form of the letters of the alphabet, in both cases they are necessary for people to understand the subject of the supernal lights. Indeed one may see that the books of the Zohar are built on these two types of symbolic pictorial forms.[3]

Male and Female Letters of the Alphabet

'Zohar' 1:159a, Vayetze

The divine and human worlds are made up of structures reflecting male and female aspects that when united provide a harmonious balance.

Rabbi Simeon [bar Yochai] said all the letters of the alphabet are either male or female and they come together to form a unity. This is the secret of the upper waters and the lower waters, which are really one, and form a perfect union. Because of this someone who knows them and is careful about them has a meritorious portion in this world and in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*]. They are the underlying principle of the perfect unity… The letters are spread out on all sides to bind everything into a unity. For there are letters in which the secret of femininity resides and letters in which the secret of masculinity resides, and they bind everything together and they become one. This is the secret of the complete divine name.

Alphabet and the Soul

'Chesed Le-avraham' 4:6

Language is at the heart of creation and retains its power in the human world.

Know that there is no body, vital soul [*nefesh*], spirit [*ruach*] or higher soul [*neshamah*] that has not been created through the twenty-two letters of the Torah. Each of them possesses the twenty-two letters of the Torah which are on the human face, and the skin covers them… The righteous [*tzaddikim*], however, are able through the power of their souls to make them shine out from within the skin of people's faces, and to transfer these letters through their skin so they are revealed to the eyes of those that merit seeing the inner letters. This is how earlier generations were able to see a person's sins written on their forehead, and also how the righteous now can see these letters.

AMULETS

Amulets and the Wicked

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 69, p. 104a

Practical Kabbalah involves the use of white magic, in the form of amulets, with magic formulae written on them, or holy names, to control angelic forces. Here is an explanation of the limitations on such use.

The wicked have the souls of demons and evil spirits. Therefore it is only black magic and the worship of demons like themselves that are effective for them. For the wicked hate all the holy names and divine names[1] of the Holy One, blessed be He, and all the angels. Because of this neither amulets, nor holy names, nor angels are at all effective for them, since like seeks out like.

ARAMAIC

Aramaic Language of *Sitra Achra*

‘Zohar’ 2:129a–b, Terumah

For the Kabbalists the battle against the powers of evil takes place in every area of ritual activity. Here it is found in the liturgy.

The *Kaddish* sanctification prayer[1] spreads out in all directions, above, below and to all sides of faith. It breaks open locks, metal seals and evil Shells [*Kelippot*]. This is the praise through which the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, is elevated more than through other praises. The reason why this causes greater elevation is because it overcomes the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*] and elevates the glory of the Holy One above everything. We therefore have to recite it in the language of the Other Side and to respond with power and strength, ‘Amen. May His great name be blessed.’

This is in order to break the power of the Other Side and to elevate the honour of the Holy One above all things. When through this *Kaddish* sanctification the power of the Other Side is broken, then the honour of the Holy One is elevated. God brings to mind His children and brings to mind His name.

Since the glory of the Holy One is elevated by this *Kaddish* sanctification, it can only be recited in the presence of ten adult males. With this Aramaic language the power of the Other Side is inexorably overcome and its power is broken.… Happy are the holy People to whom the Holy One has given the holy Torah in order that they should merit the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*].

HEAVENLY VOICE (*BAT KOL*)

Bat Kol and Dreams

‘Zohar’ 1:238a, Vayechi

Revelation from heaven can come in different ways – here as a dimension of revelation in dreams, which are not all that reliable.

Come and see. How stupid people are, for they do not know about the glory of their Master and do not pay attention to it. Nor do they contemplate the words of the Torah, and they do not know the

swamp in which they are trapped. As it is written,

> The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.[1]

At an earlier time prophecy rested on humans, and they knew and could contemplate the upper glory. When prophecy ceased from them, they utilized a heavenly voice [*Bat Kol*]. Nowadays prophecy and the heavenly voice have ceased, so people only use dreams.

Dreams, however, are at a much lower external level as we have learnt, 'dreams are one sixtieth part of prophecy'.[2]… This is because dreams are seen by everyone, since dreams come from the Left Side [*Sitra Achra*] and descend many levels. They are also shown to guilty people, even to idolaters, because sometimes demons take over the dreams, hear them and let people know them. They may mock people and show them false things [in dreams], though sometimes people hear true things, which are sent as messages to guilty people to inform them of heavenly matters.

Bat Kol and Resurrection

'Zohar' 1:118a, Vayera Midrash Ha-Neelam

The voice of prophecy was thought to have ceased, but a lesser degree of prophecy in the form of a Bat Kol*, a heavenly echo, will be in operation at the Resurrection.*

Rabbi Yochanan said: We have learnt[1] that when a person enters the grave he does so with noise, and when he rises at the Resurrection of the Dead, is it not logical that he should arise with many noises? Rabbi Jacob said: In future a heavenly voice [*Bat Kol*] will burst out aloud in the cemeteries and declaim: 'Awake and sing you who sleep in the dust and who in future will live by the dew of the great upper light', as it is written: 'For your dew is the dew of light, and the earth will give forth the spirits of the dead.'[2]

LITERATURE AND

MYSTICAL PARABLES

Sefer Yetzirah and Abraham

'Tzioni' Lech Lecha, by Menachem Tzioni

Mystical literature emerges not merely from the revelation to Moses, but both before and after. This is about the terse, enigmatic and influential Book of Formation, Sefer Yetzirah*, ascribed to the Patriarch Abraham. The book is thought to have contained instructions for making an artificial man, hence the verse from Genesis can be taken literally. Abraham and his wife Sarah actually produced a humanoid being through the magic of Practical Kabbalah in it.*

And the souls which they made in Haran.[3]

We have a tradition from our fathers that the Patriarch Abraham, peace be upon him, wrote the Book of Formation in its present form, for God was with him.

Rebbe Nachman's Mystical Parables

'Sippurim Niflaim', by Nachman of Breslav

Towards the end of his life, Rebbe Nachman began to tell his disciples mystical fairy stories, which he considered an important teaching medium to convey his Kabbalistic ideas. The following four short tales and parables come from a collection called 'Sippurim Niflaim' ('Wonderful Tales'), and were subsequently republished at the end of the collection 'Kokhvei Or'.

The Clay Digger's Fortune

Achieving one's individual, unique way of serving God is through the maintenance of joy despite everything.

There is a story about a poor man who earned his living by digging up clay which he then sold. One time when he was digging clay he found a precious stone that was obviously very valuable, but he did

not know its value. So he went to a jeweller to inquire about its value. The jeweller told him that in their country there was no one who could pay the value of the stone, and that he would have to journey [to England] to the capital city of London.

He was very poor, however, and could not afford the fare. So he sold everything he possessed and went from house to house collecting handouts, until he had enough money to travel to the sea, where he wanted to board a ship. Not having enough money for the ship's ticket, he went to the captain and showed him the diamond.[1] The captain immediately took him aboard the ship with great honour and said to him, 'You are no doubt an important person.' He gave him a special first-class cabin, with all the luxuries that befitted such an eminent aristocrat. His cabin had a porthole looking out on to the sea, and he rejoiced in the presence of the diamond, particularly at mealtimes. For the joy, and the feeling of well-being, were advantageous for him digesting his food easily.

One time he sat down to eat and the diamond was on the table in front of him, so that he could rejoice in its presence. Well, he fell asleep. The cabin steward came in and, not knowing about the diamond, he gathered up the tablecloth with the crumbs in it and shook it out into the sea. When he woke from his sleep and realized what had happened he felt great distress and nearly went out of his mind. What could he do? The captain was a thug who would kill him for the price of the boat ticket. So he adopted an appearance of joy, as if nothing had happened. Now it was the custom of the captain to spend a couple of hours each day talking to him. When he [the captain] came on this day he [the clay digger] put on an appearance of joy, so that the captain did not notice any change.

The captain said to him, 'I know that you are a wise and straightforward person. Look, I wanted to buy a large amount of wheat to sell in London at great profit, but I am afraid that people will say that I stole it from the king's store. So let the acquisition be registered in your name, and I will pay you well for this.' This seemed a good idea [to the clay digger], and that is what they did. As soon as they arrived in London the captain died, and everything now belonged to the man, and it was worth many times the value of the diamond.

At the end of the story Rebbe Nachman concluded by saying, 'The diamond did not really belong to him, and the proof of that is that

he lost it. While the wheat did really belong to him, and the proof is that it remained with him. How this all came about was because he kept up an appearance of joy.'

The Treasure under the Bridge

Every individual can raise himself to his full spiritual potential, but he needs the Tzaddik*, the Chasidic master, to direct him so he can discover his own treasure within.*

One time a man from a certain city dreamt that in Vienna under a bridge there was a treasure. Therefore, he journeyed there and stood beside the bridge trying to think of what to do. For by day it was not possible to do anything because of the people there. A soldier passed by and asked him why he was standing there lost in thought. He reckoned that it was best to tell him, so that he might help him and they could divide the treasure. Thus he told him the whole story. The soldier replied to him, 'You foolish Jew, paying attention to a mere dream. For I too have had a dream that in a certain place, in a certain house (and he actually mentioned the very town and name of the Jew), in the cellar there is a treasure. Do you think I would journey to that person?' So the man returned home and dug in his cellar and found a treasure. He then said, 'I now know that the treasure is with me, but to discover it one has to journey to Vienna.'

[Rebbe Nachman added:] The same is true when it comes to serving God. The treasure is with every person himself, but to know about the treasure one must journey to a *Tzaddik*.

The Parable of the Turkey

The role of the Tzaddik *is to show a person sunk in the physical world, 'regarding himself as a turkey', that he is really a prince, and can transcend his animal nature to serve God.*

Once a king's son was seized by the mad delusion that he was a bird, known as a turkey, and that he needed to sit naked under the table and peck at the crumbs and bones like a turkey. All the doctors despaired of helping him and curing him of this fantasy.

The king suffered greatly because of it. Until a certain sage turned up and said, 'I will undertake to cure him.' So he also undressed till he was naked and sat under the table beside the prince. He also pecked at the crumbs and the bones. The king's son asked him, 'Who are you and what are you doing here?' The wise man replied, 'Well, what are you doing here?' The prince said, 'I am a turkey.' The wise man said, 'I am also a turkey.' So the two of them sat together for a while, till they became accustomed to each other. Then the wise man signalled (to those around the table) that they should send down shirts for them. The wise man who was a turkey said to the prince, 'Do you think that turkeys cannot wear a shirt? They can wear a shirt and still be a turkey.' So they both put on shirts. After a while he signalled that they should send down trousers for them. He said to him, as before, 'Do you think that with trousers they are not able to be a turkey, etc.', till they put on trousers and so on with the other garments. Then he signalled to them that they should send down human food from the table. He said to him, 'Do you think that if we eat good food we cannot be a turkey? We can eat and still be a turkey.' So they ate. After that he said to him, 'Do you think that a turkey has to be specifically under the table? One can still be a turkey and sit beside the table.' He continued to behave in a similar way with him until he cured him completely.

This parable will be understood by those of understanding. We can say that the person who wants to draw near to the service of God, behold he is the turkey. Clothed in the physical world. In this way he can, little by little, draw himself near to the service of God, until he enters it completely.

The Diseased Wheat

The rituals of Judaism, particularly the head phylacteries which are worn on the upper forehead, are a sign of the ultimate madness of human life without a spiritual dimension.

Once a king said to his beloved friend, who was his Lord Chamberlain, 'I see in the stars that all those who will eat any of the wheat that grows this year will become insane. So let us draw up a plan of action.' He answered him that they should prepare in

advance some good wheat, so they would not have to eat any of the [diseased] wheat. The king replied to him, 'If so, since we cannot provide for everyone, then we alone will not be mad while all the world will be insane. In such a case the situation will be reversed. We would actually be the only mad ones.

'Therefore we will certainly have to eat the [diseased] wheat. Only let us make a mark on our foreheads so that we will at least know that we are insane. For when I will look at your forehead, and you will look at my forehead, we will know from the sign that we are insane.'

MYSTICISM

Who Should Study Kabbalah

'Zohar Chadash' 6d, Midrash Ha-Neelam Bereshit

Kabbalah is not meant for everyone; the restrictions on its study are apparent from the limited way the Bible text begins.

Rabbi Judah said: Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, mention the creation of the Heaven and the Earth first of all, when in fact the Throne of Glory and the angels were created first? The reason is so that people should not think about things which are hidden from human eyes, and which have not been revealed explicitly.

Rabbi [Judah the Prince] said: It is to show something to people who are not gifted with wisdom, and to whom it is not fitting to reveal the secrets of the Torah. As Rabbi Isaac has said:

> One only reveals the secrets of the Torah to a person who is wise, who has studied Scripture and the Mishnah, whose Rabbinic learning is on the right lines, who is God-fearing and who is an expert in every matter.[1]

So one can say to a person who does not qualify in these regards, and yet asks about secrets and matters above, which are hidden:

> What are you asking? Lift up your eyes and see what Scripture says: 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.'[1] You should know that the

Torah does not reveal any more.

Kabbalah Texts Hidden and Revealed

'Shem Hagedolim', *Seforim* sv 'Bahir', by Chaim Joseph David Azulai

Kabbalistic texts, especially the Zohar, have a power to enlighten even those who do not understand the meaning of their words.

All the words of our Sages are built on mystical wisdom[2]… and the whole of the Talmud is based on the secrets of the Torah. Nevertheless, they have profoundly clothed their words, so that it cannot be recognized at all that they are speaking secrets of the Torah.

This is the answer that I gave to a certain intellectual who questioned what was written by the disciples of Rabbi Isaac Luria: that studying the Zohar is a great rectification [*tikkun*] to illuminate the soul and to sanctify it. The rabbi [Luria], may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, provided a rectification for a penitent [*baal teshurah*] to study five pages of Torah[3] each day, even though he did not understand what he was reading and saying. For this reading is a radiance that has the effect of illuminating the soul and rectifying it. It seems that specifically this study has this magical remedy more than the study of Mishnah, Talmud or Scripture. It is amazing how much greater its power is than all of the Torah, whether Scripture or Mishnah. These were his words.

I said to him: You should know that there is no doubt that all study of the holy Torah is of an elevated nature and it can raise people up, particularly if they study truth for its own sake. Certainly this study builds structures in heaven, rectifies worlds and unites lovers.[1] Even the masters of secrets[2] have a duty to study Scripture, Mishnah and *halakhah* each day, as our master Rabbi Isaac Luria himself has spoken in a holy manner about this, and as his deeds indicate. Great though this study of Scripture, Mishnah and Talmud may be, however, these are heavily masked[3] texts, and the secret mysteries cannot be recognized in them at all. This is not true when we are talking about explicit secrets of the Torah, and there is no foolish reader who does not understand, in general

terms, that its words deal with depths of the mysteries of the Torah. Therefore, when the secrets of the Torah are revealed without any garments, they shine upon and enlighten the soul. This is true even though their words are, from some aspects, completely closed and sealed up; that is, to understand the essence of what is hidden at a most high level, and to know the subject matter clearly and coherently. This is certainly a great necessity, and these things will not be understood except from the mouth of a great sage to the ear of someone who understands enough to receive it. In general, however, it is recognizable that they are supernal mysteries and this causes an effect on their heavenly roots.

The Correct Manner of Study of Kabbalah

'Keter Shem Tov', section 424, vol. 2, p. 124

The following story illustrates the existential approach of the Chasidic mystics to Kabbalistic texts. There is an explicit criticism of the non-Chasidic approach which is dismissed as mechanical.

Rebbe Dov Baer heard about the reputation of the holy Rebbe the Besht, that everyone was journeying to see him, and that through his prayers he was performing great and awesome things. Now Dov Baer had a very acute mind and was an expert in the whole of the Talmud and in all *halakhic* writings. He was also well versed in Kabbalistic wisdom. He wondered about the greatness of the Besht, and one time decided to journey to see the Besht in order to test him….

When he came to the Besht he thought he would hear Torah from him, but the Besht merely told him some stories.… Really all these stories that the Besht told contained great and wonderful wisdom for those who understood them. Dov Baer, however, did not understand; therefore, he returned to his inn and told his servant:

> I want to leave immediately to go home, but, because the night is very dark at the moment, let us remain here therefore, until the moon is brighter, and then we will set out on our journey.

At midnight, just as Dov Baer prepared to travel, the Besht sent

his attendant to call him. So he went to the Besht. The Besht asked him if he was a scholar.[1] He replied that he was. The Besht said to him: 'That is indeed what I have heard about you, that you are a scholar.' Then the Besht asked him whether he had knowledge of the wisdom of the Kabbalah. He replied that he did.

So the Besht told his attendant to bring him the book Etz Chaim,[2] and he showed a certain passage to Dov Baer [for him to explain]. The latter said to him: 'Let me look into it and think about it.'… After that he explained the meaning of the passage to the Besht. The Besht said to him, 'You really know nothing.' Dov Baer looked at the passage again and said to the Besht:

> The interpretation which I gave is correct. But if your honour knows another interpretation do tell me, and I will accept whomsoever has the truer interpretation.

The Besht then said to him, 'Stand up on your feet', and he stood up. Now in this Kabbalistic passage there were a number of angelic names, and as soon as the Besht recited the passage, the whole house was filled with light and fire burnt round about them. They saw the angels tangibly, and the Besht said to Dov Baer:

> It is true that the meaning of the Kabbalistic passage was exactly as you said, but your learning was without soul.

Dov Baer immediately commanded his attendant to return home, while he remained there with the Besht and studied great and deep wisdoms with him.

Need for Study of Kabbalah

'Etz Chaim', Introduction

Criticism of non-mystical Judaism is found in a variety of Kabbalistic texts, but few are as uncompromising as this.

There is a Mishnaic teaching:

> Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: Every single day a heavenly voice issues forth

from Mt Horeb,[1] proclaims and says, 'Woe unto creatures for their disparagement of the Torah.'[2]

This seems to me the interpretation of this Mishnah. Without doubt when people engage in the plain meaning of Scripture and the stories of the Bible alone, the Torah clothes herself in her widow's garments and covers herself in sackcloth. All the nations say to Israel: What is special about your beloved one more than our beloved ones?[3] What is special about your Torah more than our Torahs? Does not your Torah also contain stories about trivial worldly matters?

There is no greater disparagement of the Torah than this. Therefore it says: 'Woe unto creatures for their disparagement of the Torah.' For they do not engage in the wisdom of the Kabbalah, which gives honour to the Torah. They are responsible for lengthening the Exile and for all the evils which come upon the world. This itself is what the heavenly voice proclaims each day.[1] Among those sages of the plain meaning [of Torah] themselves there are two types.

The first is a group who fear the Lord and they engage in Torah for the sake of heaven, but they have remained in darkness from their youth. They have never studied the secrets of the Torah and are afraid to touch them.… For although their souls have been hewn out from heaven, they have no heavenly light, they dwell in darkness and will never emerge from there.

There is another group who are minor sages, sharp of mind and engaging in casuistic dialectic[2] in the house of study [*bet hamidrash*]. About them Scripture says: 'I saw the mountains and they trembled and the hills shook.'[3] These people tremble and are afraid to draw near to the place of consuming fire, the mystical secrets of the Torah whose words are burning coals and a blazing flame. They are afraid lest these secrets will burn them with blisters.… Therefore, they never speak[4] about the gate of the Ten *Sefirot*.

There is no doubt that people who think this way are evil and foolish people. For, if it were not the case that they regard[5] this simple wisdom as sufficient, and [themselves] as sages because of their knowledge, they would not prevent themselves from entering into this wisdom.

Kabbalists and Literalists

'Etz Chaim', Introduction

Another, somewhat more muted, comparison of Kabbalistic and non-mystical Judaisms.

The sages of truth[1] are called children [of God] and they are the Masters of Kabbalah. Those who engage in the plain meaning of Scripture are merely called servants [of God].

Conditions for Kabbalah Study

'Etz Chaim', Introduction

The mystic is always in danger from the forces of evil, which are attracted to holiness, and so he must purify his actions and his consciousness before he can set out on the path of Kabbalah. A reliable master is also needed for this venture.

The main goal in the knowledge of Kabbalah is to remove thorns from the vineyard, that is why those who engage in this wisdom are called 'harvesters of the field'.[2] It is certain that the Shells [*Kelippot*] will rise up against him, to seduce him and to cause him to sin. Therefore, he should be careful not to sin even accidentally, so that the Shells should not have any hold on him.… He needs to pursue peace and not to be too strict with members of his household, whether about small or large things. How much more should he never grow angry, and he needs to keep absolutely far from this….

He should sanctify himself when engaged in sexual relations, so that he should not feel any lustful pleasure.… He should go to synagogue before dawn… and just before entering the place of worship, he should focus on the commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'[1]

After that he should enter [the building].… He should continually keep the four-lettered name of God, the Tetragrammaton, before his eyes and be in awe of it. As Scripture says: 'I have set the Lord always before me.'[2]… He should not think that the secrets of the Torah will be revealed to him when he is empty-headed, as Scripture says: 'He [God] gives wisdom to the wise.'[3] He must also

be careful not to mention things in this Kabbalistic wisdom which he has not heard from a reliable person.

Zohar, Soul and Upper Paradise

'Etz Chaim', Introduction

The mystics' view of the essence of religion as dependent on the study of Kabbalistic texts is expressed strongly here.

The reward for performing commandments [*mitzvot*] and studying Torah at its plain, literal level of meaning is to be found in this world and in the earthly Garden of Eden [*Gan Eden*]. It is impossible to ascend to higher spiritual worlds, however, unless a person engages in the wisdom of the Zohar, according to his ability and according to his capacity.

If he does not do so he will remain outside the gates of all these higher spiritual worlds, even though he is beautified by commandments and good deeds. Therefore, his vital soul [*nefesh*] and spirit [*ruach*] remain below in the earthly Garden of Eden, whereas the soul [*neshamah*] itself, whose portion is in the mystical secrets of the Torah, is punished and in flames outside the heavenly gates of the upper Garden of Eden.

Kabbalistic Meaning of the Talmud

'Etz Chaim', Introduction

The clash between purely Rabbinic Judaism, as exemplified in the Babylonian Talmud, which is the source of much of Jewish practice, and the mystical side of Judaism, which Kabbalists saw as its true essence, is brought out.

Without doubt those who study only the Babylonian Talmud are like blind men who grope along a wall,[1] wearing the garments of the Torah. They do not have eyes to see the mystical secrets [*razei Torah*] of the Torah, which are hidden within it. For it is not for nothing, not merely according to their fiat, that they decide what is impure or pure, prohibited or permitted, fit [*kasher*] or not fit.

Rather this is determined by the inner meaning of the Torah, as is known to the mystics [*yodei chen*].[2]… That is why Scripture says, 'Who is as blind as my servant?'[3] The intention [of this verse] is to exclude the sages of truth, the masters of Kabbalah, who are called sons [of God].

Those, however, who only engage in the study of Mishnah without contemplating its mystical secrets [*sod*] yet decide laws of what is prohibited and permitted according to its secrets, they are certainly blind.… Someone who engages only in the study of plain meaning [of texts] is called 'a servant'. Concerning such a person Isaiah prophesied that they should merit walking along a path that they have not yet known, which is the path of true wisdom. In this world this path of life is guarded by the sword and the Cherubim,[4] so that only those people who merit it would be able to understand the mysteries of the Torah.

True Works of Kabbalah

'Etz Chaim', Introduction to Shaar Hahakdamot

Chaim Vital is critical here of many of the Kabbalists themselves, for the lack of creative mystical insight in their works. His master Isaac Luria was a great Kabbalistic innovator.

Do not approach any of the books of the later Kabbalists after Nachmanides, for from the time of Nachmanides onwards the way of this wisdom[1] has been hidden from the eyes of all the sages. There remains among them only a little of the branch of an introduction, without roots or leaves, and on them these later Kabbalists have built their words through the human intellect. By yourself you will be able to know and to test this, for a sharp-minded investigator will be able to absorb and know the majority of their introductions and principles in four or five days.

All their words are a repetition of the subject matter in different words. The essence of their introductions is that there are Ten *Sefirot*, and they join together mountains upon mountains of *Sefirot*, so that the principles of their words can be written down in two or three essays.

Few True Works of Kabbalah

'Etz Chaim', Introduction to Shaar Hahakdamot

The following is Vital's critique not merely of schools of Kabbalah other than Luria's, but also of other interpretations of Luria's teaching apart from his own.

Men of heart listen to me, do not defy God by looking into books of later writers which are built merely on human understanding… so that you dwell secure and at peace without fear of evil. Therefore, I who write, the young Chaim Vital,… have called this work by my own name Sefer Etz Chaim and also by the name of this mighty wisdom, the wisdom of the Zohar, known as the Tree of Life and not the Tree of Knowledge.… The reason is that those who taste of this wisdom merit life and the land of eternal life. From this Tree of Life you shall surely eat and live forever.

… You should know that from the day that my teacher [Luria], may his memory be for the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], began to reveal this wisdom, my hand has not left his hand even for one moment. All that you will find written in various monographs in his name, which contradicts what I have written in this book, is a complete mistake, for they have not understood his words. Even if they had some added material which does not disagree with our book, do not pay any real attention to them. For not one of those who listened to his holy words actually was able to penetrate to the depths of his language and intentions, and without any doubt they have not understood him.

Do not rely on your own understanding if you think that you can extract the good and leave what is bad. For these words are not available to man's heart merely according to the human intellect, and logical interpretation of them is very dangerous. Thinking itself can lead to heresy,[1] heaven forbid. Therefore, I must warn you not to look into any of the monographs written in the name of my master… except what I have written for you in this book.

Kabbalah Inspired by Holy Spirit

'Etz Chaim', Introduction to Shaar Hahakdamot

The spiritual hero of the Kabbalists is Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai.

Whoever is foolish let him turn here, pay attention and see that all the words of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, came through the Holy Spirit, and he saw with his own eyes all the souls of the sages, even those who would be created in the future.

True Kabbalah Inspiration

'Etz Chaim', Introduction to Shaar Hahakdamot

Here Vital provides an insight not merely into the character of his teacher, but also into the world of Kabbalist magic and the supernatural.

When I saw the longing of those that fear the word of the Lord, I saw fit to compose this book and to enlighten their eyes… My words are built on the hidden introductions which were revealed to my master [Luria], from the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Elijah. Today I will express the riddles, miracles and wonders of the One perfect in Knowledge for, just as in each generation the God of the first and last things has performed wonderful mercies with us, so this day He has revealed His holy arm and sent down to us a holy angel from heaven: the pious, mystic and divine Rabbi, his honour our teacher Rabbi Isaac Luria….

From the narrow [*metzar*] places of Egypt [*mitzrayim*] the Lord called him, and answered him in the broad places of the Lord, in the holy and expansive land, in a city great unto God of sages and scribes, in the upper Galilee, the city of Safed, may it be built up and established speedily in our days, Amen. Two years before the Rabbi departed this life, he came from Egypt through the word of the Lord. For it was told to him through the Holy Spirit that the time had been reached when his soul was commanded to return to its place, to God who gave it to him.… In the Heavenly Academy they commanded him to live the rest of his days in the Holy Land….

When he emigrated from Egypt he laid his hands upon me and illuminated my eyes with some of the true and deep-rooted general introductions that they had handed over to him from the heavenly academy,[1] from the Holy One, blessed be He, and from the mouth of Elijah, who revealed himself to him continuously to preserve the

remainder in the land. Permission was granted to him to continuously reveal hidden secrets about the Tikkunim and the Zohar, which had not been made known since the days of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. I hesitate to express myself, because of the anger and jealousy which rise up against me from men of our generation, who are wise in their own estimation, who are obstinate and refuse to believe that God is in the land. I am afraid of their jealousy if they would hear of his greatness and wonders, heaven forbid, for they might claim a defect in holy things and say: 'What is the difference between this man and other men? Has God not also spoken to us?'

Were it not for this I would tell a little about his ways and wonders which my own eyes have seen; amazing things which had not been seen in all the earth from the days of the Mishnaic Rabbis such as Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai and his companions. From the time of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai until that of the Rabad,[1] this wisdom was transferred from mouth to mouth, and Elijah revealed himself to a small number of sages until the time of Nachmanides. From the time of Nachmanides until my master, there was no one who truly grasped this wisdom like he did, for he knew Mishnah, Talmud, Aggadot and Midrashim, and on each word of them different interpretations according to the form of PaRDeS. [He knew] Mysteries of Creation [*Maaseh Bereshit*], Mysteries of the Divine Chariot [*Maaseh Merkabah*], the language of birds, the conversation of palms, trees and herbs,… the flaming embers of charcoal, and the conversation of angels.

He used to speak about transmigrating spirits, good spirits and bad spirits. He could recognize the odour of clothes… and the silence of birds. He could bring out the soul of a person while he was still alive, speak with it as much as he desired, and after that he returned it to him. He used to see souls at the time that they left the human body, and in the cemeteries, and when they ascended every Friday to the Garden of Eden. He would speak with the souls of the righteous who were in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], and they revealed to him the secrets of the Torah.

He also knew the wisdom of physiognomy,[1] the lines of the hand, the true interpretation of dreams, and old and new reincarnations. By looking at their foreheads he could recognize what people were thinking, what they had dreamt, what verse they had read when

they ascended at night to the Garden of Eden.

He would teach people an explanation of the root of their souls. He would read on their forehead both the positive things and the transgressions that they had thought about.

He used to give to each one a rectification [*tikkun*] for their sins, and to mystics he gave unifications [of the divine] according to their special conditions or the root of their soul, which is attached to Adam, the first man. He knew what mistakes there were in books, knew how to smite people with blindness and knew everything which his mystical colleagues had taught. He was full of piety, good manners, humility, fear of the Lord, love of the Lord, fear of sin, and he had all the good moral qualities and good deeds. All of his knowledge was available to him at all times, all hours and minutes. All these wisdoms remained continuously in his lap. My own eyes have seen this.

All that he achieved was because of the great piety and asceticism after he had involved himself for many days with old and new books of this wisdom; to these he added piety, asceticism, purity and holiness. This brought him into the domain of the Holy Spirit and Elijah, who used to reveal himself to him continuously. This I know faithfully from his own mouth. Even if there is no revelation to a prophet, or seer, in our generation, nevertheless the Holy Spirit was not prevented from hovering over his [Luria's] illuminated face.

Secret Meaning of the Talmud

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Chukat

The contrast between Talmudic and Kabbalistic Judaism is brought out in this criticism of religious literalists.

He has made me to dwell in dark places like those that are long dead.[1] Said Rabbi Jeremiah: This refers to the Babylonian Talmud.[2] For the secret mysteries, which are called *zohar*[3] and the light of the Torah, are darkened when they clothe themselves in the literal meaning of the Talmuds, the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem one.

Mysticism of the Talmud

‘Shaar Hamitzvot’, Ekev

In the ongoing conflict between the mystical and the Rabbinic approach to Judaism, here is a Kabbalistic attempt to claim the Talmud as a mystical text.

All the words of the Talmudic Rabbis are like firebrands, mysteries of the Torah, which they hid from the eyes of simple people who are not fit to know their secrets.

Therefore they spoke in parables. The words of the Sages and their riddles are allegorical and even their casual conversation needs to be studied.

Simeon bar Yochai and Moses

‘Zohar’ 3:132b, Naso Idra Rabba

The self-confidence of the Kabbalist as the recipient of mystical secrets is brought out.

Rabbi Simeon said[:]… I call the very highest levels of heaven, and the very highest levels of the holy earth, as witnesses that I can now perceive things which have never been seen by anyone from the time that Moses ascended Mt Sinai for the second time. For I observe my face illuminated like the light of the powerful sun, which will emerge with healing for the world, as it is written:

> To you who fear my name the sun of righteousness will shine with healing in its wings.[1]

Furthermore, I know that my face is shining, whereas Moses did not know and did not perceive this, as it is written:

> And Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shining.[2]

NAMES OF GOD

Speech and the Divine Name

‘Midrash Talpiyot’, p. 31, anaf Evarim, by Elijah Hakohen

The divine name, symbolizing the essence of God, is to be found everywhere but particularly in words.

It says in the book Reshit Chokhmah:

> The organs of a human being are all ordered after the manner of the creation. That is why a man is called a microcosm.[3] The person that makes God king over each organ [of his body], it is as if he made Him rule over the whole world.[4]

There are commandments [*mitzvot*] that depend on the face, and those that depend on the ears. The Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered divine name, is found in every organ. It is found in the four colours of the hair, and in the four colours of the eye, in the four compartments of the ear, in the four colours of the face, in the [sound of the] voice, in speech, in reading, in conversation, in the activity of the hands and in each organ of the body. This four-lettered divine name is in control over every commandment in each organ. From this a man can see how much of a blemish he causes when he misuses one of his organs, since he causes a blemish in the divine name. For all his organs are sealed with His name, may He be blessed. If a person performs a commandment with that organ, happy is he for he has caused the four-lettered divine name to be king over him.

> [Says the ‘Midrash Talpiyot’ anthologist:]
>
> See the great defect caused by a person who speaks obscenities, or vain words, for he brings out the holy and awesome name through that speech, may the Merciful One help us. This is the reason that someone who curses his father or his mother is punished by death, more severely than one who hits his parents. Although striking one’s parents is a greater thing, one does not desecrate the name of God; one only infringes the honour of his parents. This is not true of the one who curses, for with every word which he utters he pronounces the holy name over those words of abuse, heaven forbid. So apart from the fact that he is denigrating his father and his mother, he is also denigrating the divine name. This is easy to understand.

Divine Name and Creation

‘Zohar Chadash’ *2d,* Midrash Haneelam Bereshit

There is a dispute about how the world came into being. Although at first glance it seems this is merely about the interpretation of various verses, behind this is a fundamental difference of opinion as to whether the world is part of God’s essence, represented by a letter of His name, or the product of something more external to the Godhead, namely the Ten Sefirot*, represented by the ten spoken words or even the single creative word of God.*

We have learnt in the Mishnah, ‘With ten sayings the world was created.’[1] Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Nathan say: It was created with one saying. What is that? As it is written, ‘Through the word of God the heavens were made.’[1] And Rabbi Abba said: As it is written, ‘For He spoke and it was, He commanded and it stood.’[2]

Rabbi Elazar said: Neither this nor that. Rather the universe was created with one letter without any speech utterance. As we have learnt Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One, blessed be He, took one letter from His name, and with that letter He created….

So how will we understand the verses, ‘He spoke and it was’ and ‘Through the word of God the heavens were made’? Rabbi Elazar said: To show the world that it was created but was not actualized,[3] and each element needed to be actualized, to bring out its activities and powers which were fitting for it….

We have further learnt that Rabbi Abba said that Rabbi Yochanan said: Before the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He and His name were one. He had it in mind to create the world; beforehand he created a thousand worlds,… after that He created other worlds, to let it be known that before Him everything is Naught.

The Torah Is the Name of God

‘Nachmanides Commentary on the Torah’, Introduction, by Moses Nachmanides

The holiness of the Torah is in part the holiness of the divine name out

of which it is formed.

We have a true tradition in our hands that the whole of the Pentateuch is really the names of the Holy One, blessed be He. The words can be split up, in a different manner, into names.… Our Rabbi Solomon has already written in his commentary on the Talmud that the great name [of God] of seventy-two letters emerges in some way from three verses in the Book of Exodus.[1] Because of this a scroll of the Torah in which there is a mistake in one letter, either where a letter is added or subtracted,[2] is defective.… It seems that the idea that the Torah was written in black fire on white fire means that it was written continuously without any breaks in the words. So it would be possible to read it in the form of the divine names or to read it in the way we read it, as Torah and commandments. It was given to Moses our Teacher in the form of the commandments, but he was given the way of reading it as divine names orally.

CHAPTER 6
SUPERNATURAL POWERS

CLEAVING TO GOD (*DEVEKUT*)

Devekut, Commandments (*Mitzvot*) and Secular Matters

'Divrei Moshe', Vayera, by Moses Shoham of Dolena

Cleaving to God, a form of spiritual attachment in which the Kabbalist focuses his consciousness on God while engaging in other activities, is a central religious concept among Chasidic mystics.

I have heard from the holy mouth of the Besht an interpretation of the Rabbinic teaching, 'The small talk of the Sages needs to be studied.'[1] The reason is because the principal part of the perfection of each and every righteous person is that they do not interrupt their cleaving [*devekut*] to God even for a moment. Also in all his words, when he needs to speak to people about matters which are necessary for worldly affairs, he will see that he speaks in a manner that his cleaving to God is not interrupted. Even when he performs a commandment he should be very careful about this, for when he thinks about the manner of performing the commandment, it is possible that the cleaving to God will leave him. For this one needs great alertness. This is what is meant by our Sages when they say that one should study how to speak any necessary small talk in a manner that does not interrupt the cleaving to God.

Progress in *Devekut* 'Shivchei Moharan' 33-4, by Nathan of

Nemirov

Underlying some forms of Chasidic mystical contemplation is the annihilation of self, bittul ha-yesh. *Here this is transferred from overcoming one's ego and desires to a sense that all one's knowledge is nothing before God.*

Rebbe Nachman [of Breslav] used to ascend continuously from one spiritual level to another. Although he merited achieving very elevated and awesome levels in higher divine worlds, nevertheless his mind was never at ease with this. Immediately after such an achievement his heart was broken and he felt sorry for himself in great humility, as if he had never smelled the odour of the service of God, and had not yet begun at all. Many times his way was to say that now he knew absolutely nothing at all. Sometimes he even swore about this, that in truth he did not know anything at all. Even though on a previous day and at a previous time he revealed ancient matters, he still said after that that he knew absolutely nothing.

This matter was completely new and unprecedented, and he said explicitly about himself that his teaching was completely new, but his claim not to know anything was even newer.… He said about himself that if he knew that he was now at the same spiritual level and stage as yesterday, he would not want to be himself.

Devekut and the Dark Night of the Soul

'Turei Zahav', Rimzei Rosh Hashanah, by Benjamin of Zalozitz

The Kabbalist does not remain in a state of permanent close attachment to God. Here is a Chasidic response to the dark night of the soul, when God withdraws, which sees it as enabling the spiritual growth of the mystic.

One of his followers asked the Besht: Why is it that when a person cleaves to the Creator and knows that he is close to Him, in the midst of this it sometimes seems that the cleaving is interrupted and he becomes distant from God? For a man can also know about

himself that he is distant from God. The Besht replied that this can be illustrated by the following example. What does a father do when he wants to teach his young child how to walk? He takes his child, stands him before him on the ground and stretches out his hands close to him, so that the infant does not fall to the ground. The infant walks between his father's two arms, and when the infant nearly reaches his father, then the latter gradually withdraws backward. This is in order that the infant will go forward as it draws nearer each time. Through this method the child will teach itself to walk well. If the father did not withdraw each time, the infant would only go the short distance between the place where his father had first put him and the place where his father originally stood. Now, however, since the father withdraws we find that the infant walks a little more each time. This is the way that the Holy One, blessed be He, behaves with His creatures. When a person is aflame with cleaving to the Creator, if God did not distance Himself from him, then his cleaving would not be potent and continuous. Now, however, since He distances Himself the person needs to strengthen himself in his cleaving each time to a greater extent. For whenever he sees himself distant from Him, may He be blessed, then he needs to add and renew his cleaving more than before. From the power of this, his cleaving is unified and strengthened more each time.

Strange Thoughts

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot, by Isaiah of Yanov

Devekut *is threatened by worldly thoughts, particularly of a sexual nature. The Chasidic mystics in particular were interested in overcoming these 'strange thoughts'.*

When strange thoughts come into a person's mind, he should be greatly mortified, for he has been pushed out of the king's palace, and he should return to the palace in great shame and with immense humility. For a strange thought is a sin, equivalent to giving birth to an illegitimate child [*mamzer*].[1]… Just as thought is both male and female, so sound and speech are male and female. If a person has a strange thought and yet he speaks holy words, then this is like an illegitimate child. It has the form of a kosher person

but the inner part is bad. So it is with speech which has holy letters, but the thought he thinks is evil, because he is thinking about something else and gives birth to an illegitimate child from a holy word. Furthermore, the Holy One, blessed be He, says, 'Why did you come with a word and yet I am not in the word', for his thought has floated into other things.

Devekut and Torah Study for Its Own Sake

'Toldot Yaakov Yosef', Vayetze

The study of Torah, central to Rabbinic Judaism, posed problems for Kabbalists because it involved a purely intellectual religious activity. Chasidic responses were to emphasize the non-intellectual dimensions of learning, while non-Chasidic mystics integrated the intellectual and spiritual approaches to learning, as the two following extracts illustrate.

According to what I have received from my teacher [the Besht] the essential part of the involvement with Torah and prayer is that one should attach oneself to the inner spirituality of the light of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*] that is found inside the letters of the Torah and of prayer. This is called study for its own sake [*lishmash*]. It is concerning this that Rabbi Meir said: 'Whoever engages in Torah for its own sake merits many things, and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him.'[2] By this he means to say that a person will know the future and all that is going to happen from the Torah itself. He will know how to behave in the study of Torah and in the service of God, may He be blessed, as well as being granted insight into upper worlds.

Torah as *Devekut*

'Nefesh Hachaim' 4:10

The emotive mysticism of some Chasidic Kabbalists was opposed by the more rational approach of the Mitnaggedim.

At the time that one is involved in Torah study and analysis one certainly does not need to cleave [from *devekut*] to God at all. For

the involvement in study and analysis by themselves entail a person is attached to His will and words, may He be blessed.

For He, together with His will and His words are one entity.… It is written on a number of occasions in the Zohar that the Holy One, blessed be He, and the Torah are one. More than that it is said, 'We have learnt that the Holy One, blessed be He, is called Torah, etc., and there is no Torah but the Holy One, blessed be He.'[1] It is also because the upper root of the holy Torah is in the highest of the worlds which are known as the Worlds of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*]. This is the mystery of the hidden garment, which is mentioned in the secret wonders of wisdom of the teaching of our master Rabbi Isaac Luria, may his memory be for a blessing, which is the origin of the mystery of the letters of the holy Torah, as it is written, 'The Lord acquired me at the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old.'[2] That is what our Rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, have said: that it [the Torah] preceded the world. This means that it preceded all worlds.

ARTIFICIAL MAN (*GOLEM*)

Golem in the Talmud

'TB', Sanhedrin 65b

Traditions about creating an artificial man, a golem *– a zombie or automaton – by use of Kabbalistic techniques have persisted from early Rabbinic times until the pre-modern period, both in Jewish folklore and in official texts. Here is a Talmudic account of making such artificial creatures.*

Rava said: If righteous people wanted to, they could create the world,[1] as it says in Scripture, 'For it is your sins that divide you from your God.'[2]

Rava [once] created an artificial man. He sent it before Rabbi Zeira. The latter engaged it in conversation, and it did not reply to him at all. He said to it, 'You are from the magicians,[3] return to your dust.'

Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Oshaya used to sit every Sabbath eve

and involve themselves with the Book of Formation [Sefer Yetzirah]. They created a three-year-old calf [by its means], which they ate.

Can a *Golem* Make Up a Quorum (*Minyan*)?

'Chakham Tzvi' 93, by Tzvi Hersh Ashkenazi

Although the mystics tried to keep magical practices separate from ritual activity, occasionally the two had to be reconciled, as in the following legal responsum.

I have my doubts about a man created through the Book of Formation [Sefer Yetzirah], like the one mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, 'Rava created a man.'[4] People have also testified the same about my grandfather the sage [*gaon*] Elijah, the Head of the Law Court of Chelm. Can one include [such an artificial man] in the quorum of ten [*minyan*] for those rituals for which ten men are needed. For instance, the *Kaddish* prayer and the *Kedushah*. Do we maintain that since it says, 'You shall sanctify me in the midst of the Children of Israel',[5] therefore we cannot include [such an artificial man]. Or perhaps as it is established in the Babylonian Talmud, 'He who brings up an orphan in his home, Scripture considers it as if he had given birth to him.'[1]…

Now given that [such an artificial man is] the work of the hands of the righteous he should be included among the Children of Israel, for the work of the hands of the righteous are indeed their children. It seems to me that since we find that Rabbi Zeira said, 'You are from the magicians, return to your dust.'[2] This means he killed him. If one assumes that there is some use in including him in the quorum of ten for special holy rituals, then Rabbi Zeira would not have removed him from the world. For, although there would be no prohibition on murder since the verse, 'He who sheds the blood of a man, in man, his own blood will be shed',[3] is understood to refer specifically only to a man formed inside a human, that is an embryo formed in the womb of its mother, about whom one would be guilty of shedding blood. This would exclude the man that Rava created which was not made in a woman's womb.

Nevertheless, since there is some benefit [from such a man] he would not have removed him from the world. Rather it is certain to

me that he cannot be included in the quorum for rituals of sanctification.

The *Golem*'s Soul

'Chesed Le-avraham' 4:30

The golem*, though having the form of a human, is really no more than an animal.*

The form of an artificial man created by the combination of letters of the alphabet of the Book of Formation [Sefer Yetzirah] has neither spirit [*ruach*], nor higher soul [*neshamah*], rather a vitality in general, like the vitality of an animal, though in complexity it is higher than an animal's vitality. This is because the makeup of its form is superior to that of an animal and is closer to the heavenly source, not that it has a spirit and a soul. Thus when it dies and departs this life what happens is only that the parts of its body return to their elements, as in the death of an animal whose parts separate out and return to the dust of the ground as it once was. Therefore, in the killing of an animal or in the killing of such an artificial man, there is no prohibition or guilt, because in them there is no loss of spirit and soul, rather the return of the elemental parts to their source.

Creating a *Golem*

'Sifra de Tzeniuta', Introduction, by Chaim of Volozhin to Elijah of Vilna's Commentary

Chaim is writing about his teacher Elijah of Vilna (1720–97), a Kabbalist and spiritual mentor of the Eastern European Mitnaggedim.

Concerning the Book of Formation [Sefir Yetzirah] his learning was well ordered from the days of his youth, with a correct textual version and awesome depth [of insight]. For I mentioned to him ten different views about alternative textual versions in the Book of Formation. He told me that the clearest version [the one he

favoured] was like the version of the Ari [Luria], may his memory be for a blessing. Only in one instance did he add something was corrupt in the printed version of the Ari's text. I said to him that in which case it should not be too great and wonderful a thing to create a *Golem*. He replied: 'Indeed at one time I began to create a *Golem*, and while I was in the middle of making it a certain [ghostly] form passed over my head, so I stopped making it any further. I said to myself that most probably they were preventing me from heaven, because I was so young then.' I asked him how old he was then, and he replied that he was less than thirteen.

HERBS

Herbs and Angels

'Chesed Le-avraham' 6:14

Nature, as part of the divinely emanated world, reflects the heavenly world and plays a special role for the Kabbalists.

Know that there is nothing in the world that does not have an angelic prince that is responsible for it. This is the mystical meaning of the saying, 'There is no herb below that does not have a heavenly constellation [*mazal*] above that strikes it and says to it: grow.'[1] It is through this angelic prince that the heavenly flow and life force is drawn into it. This angelic prince is not able to generate any heavenly flow until he sings a song, and through this song receives the sustenance and life force to generate a heavenly flow to those below. This is the secret meaning of Perek Shirah.[2] You should know that when leaves fall off trees, some upper power departs from that angelic prince at that moment.

The high mountains have great angelic princes above, like the mountains themselves in their loftiness, for is not heaven a parallel to the earth in all its forms? The springs of water in the ground, however, have their own parallels in the kingdom of earth above. Similarly there is no place with a spring of water below in the earth which does not have in parallel to it a heavenly light above. If we see that a spring of water or a well has dried up and is blocked, this

means that the power above has been interrupted and does not draw up from the female waters.[3] When new springs of water emerge, this means that there has been some new heavenly light or soul which draws from the female waters.

MEDICINE

There were a number of Chasidic mystics who took a rather reserved attitude to medicine, because doctors represented the arrogance of human power.

Medicine Depends on Faith

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:5

The main thing is faith. Each person has to search out himself and strengthen himself in faith. For there are those who suffer illness, who have terrible afflictions, and they suffer from their illnesses only because their faith has deteriorated.[1] This is reflected in the verse, 'And God will make the plagues that afflict you of a startling nature, great and faithful plagues, and evil and faithful illnesses.'[2] There is an emphasis on the word 'faithful' because these will come through defects in faith. For when faith has deteriorated startling plagues come about against which neither medicine, nor prayer, nor the merit of the fathers is effective. For all medicines are based on plants which can grow [properly] only through faith, as our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, have said, 'Rain only descends through the merit of faith.'[3]

Medicine and God

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 167, teachings of Menachem Mendel Kalish of Warka

On Rebbe Kalish, see headnote pp. 173–4.

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka said to someone: I will teach you a

Jewish approach to things. One should never obey the instructions of a doctor completely,[4] so that one will remember that it is not the doctor who is doing the healing, but that the cure comes from heaven.

SECRETS AND MAGICAL REMEDIES *(SEGULOT)*

The Origins of Kabbalah

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Adam Harishon (from 'Sefer Hapeliah')

*Heavenly knowledge, with its inherent powers, can be granted to man by angels. The Book of Raziel, a book of white magic (*segulot*), given to Adam, was thought to reflect antique revelations of the angel Raziel. (Job suffered greatly as a test from God.)*

When Adam, the first man, evolved and the Holy One, blessed be He, put him into the Garden of Eden, an angel descended, taught him and also wrote a book for him. He warned him about every matter and showed him the order of the emanation of the world and its cause. He showed him the evolution of the world, of man's organs and sinews and everything that had been created in his body, its cause and subject matter.

He showed him each future generation and its interpreters, each future generation and its wise men. He knew about Job and the causes of his condition. This book was in existence until the days of King Hezekiah. The name of the angelic master of Adam was Raziel, and he handed over to him Kabbalistic teaching both in the book and orally, and he made him wise and showed him the future.

Correct Methods of Practical Kabbalah Not Known

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Shemot

A certain ambiguity exists among the Kabbalists even towards white magic itself, known as Practical Kabbalah, as is apparent from the

following selections. Despite the caveats expressed by Rabbi Isaac Luria, many Lurianic practices of a magical nature claimed his authority.

I have heard from my teacher [Luria], may his memory be for the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], that all the holy names and amulets [*kemiyot*] that are found in our days are faulty, even those which have been tried properly. Therefore, anyone who uses them will be punished. If, however, we knew them exactly we would indeed be able to use them.

Dangers of Practical Kabbalah

'Shaarei Kedushah' 3:6

The use of magical powers, inherent in the spiritual path and in the divine substratum of the mundane world, presented a dilemma to the mystics. On the whole they were very cautious about the use of white magic and opposed the use of black magic, if only because the boundary between them is very hard to draw.

Previous forms of practical mysticism have been forgotten.… Therefore, since Talmudic times people have not used the techniques of ascent into Paradise [*Pardes*]. From then mystics used practical mystical techniques associated with this world of Action [*Asiyah*], and this world is the lowliest of them all. The majority of the angels in it are bad and only a minority are good. Not only that but good and evil are inextricably attached to one another. Therefore, one cannot achieve anything in it, for it is impossible to achieve good alone, and therefore, any achievement will be of a mixture of good and evil, truth and lies.

This is the secret mystery of Practical Kabbalah. Therefore, it is forbidden to use it because it is inevitable that one will also attach oneself to the evil that is joined to good. A person thinks about purifying his soul but he defiles it with that evil. Even if he achieves something it will be truth mixed with lies.… The impurity of the Shells [*Kelippot*] attaches itself to any person who draws near to achieve things through Practical Kabbalah. Therefore, someone who wishes to guard his soul will distance himself from this. For apart from defiling his soul he will be punished in Purgatory [*Gehinnom*].

We have a tradition that even in this world either he or his

children will be impoverished; they will fall sick with disease; or they will change their religion.

Proof of this may be taken from the examples of Rabbi Joseph della Reina and Rabbi Solomon Molcho[1] who engaged in Practical Kabbalah and were annihilated from the world. The reason being that there can be no good without evil, and furthermore, since they forced the evil powers through conjuration, they were seduced by them and were directed into bad ways until their souls were destroyed. Of more significance than this is the fact that all the techniques of conjuring up demons were hidden away by earlier sages, and we are no longer experts in these techniques and therefore, we should keep very far away from them.

Magic and Enosh

'Zohar' 1:56a, Bereshit

Although many Kabbalists practised different forms of white magic which came from sacred powers, they retained a suspicion about black magic and sorcery which negated divine rule.

Rabbi Eleazar said: In the time of the Biblical Enosh, men had insight into the wisdom of sorcery and magic, and the skill of controlling the heavenly forces. From the day that Adam left the Garden of Eden and brought with him the knowledge of 'the leaves of the tree',[2] there was no one who used this knowledge. For Adam, his wife and their descendants did not practise it until the time of Enosh. When Enosh came, however, he saw them[3] and how their knowledge could alter the heavenly forces. So they [Enosh and his generation] used them and engaged in magic and divination. They taught them to others until these magical arts spread through the generation of the Flood, who practised them for evil purposes. With these magical arts they defied Noah. They said that worldly justice could never affect them, since they could engage in magical skills to avert all those masters of judgement. So with Enosh everyone began the practice of these magical arts, and thus it is written, 'Then the name of the Lord was called upon profanely.'[1]

Rabbi Isaac said: All the righteous men that were among them sought to restrain them, such as Jered, Methuselah and Enoch, but

without success, and the world became full of sinners who rebelled against their Master saying, 'What is the Almighty that we should serve him?'[2] This was not so foolish as it sounds, for they knew all these magical arts we have mentioned and all the angelic masters in charge of the world, and on this knowledge they relied.

THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON *(TZADDIK)*

The *Tzaddik* and the Individual

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 6

The subject of whether mystic knowledge is something any person can achieve by their own efforts or a gift from God beyond human reach is dealt with here.

There is the possibility for each individual to reach even the highest spiritual level like that of Moses our Teacher.

God and the Righteous *(Tzaddikim)*

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 27

It was believed that people of a special degree of holiness manifested the divine.

Certainly there are perfectly faithful Israelites, exceptional individuals, the righteous ones [*tzaddikim*] of the generation on whom the very essence of God, may He be blessed, appears and it goes before them. As I have heard from our master, teacher and rabbi, the holy spark Rebbe Elimelekh, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, who said about a certain person that whatever place he goes the essence of God goes before him, as it were. Therefore, when a person is at such a high level, his fear and awe falls on all the world, for everyone fears and trembles before the essence of God, which illuminates and precedes him. Not

everyone who wishes to take on the divine name can come and take it, and those at a high spiritual level are few [*bnei aliyah*].[1]

A Dead *Tzaddik* May Help the Living

'Likkutei Shas', by Chaim Vital (Baba Kamma 9b)

The idea that a person may have more than one soul in the same body is explained.

Righteous people [*tzaddikim*] who have already died come back to guard the living in this world, specifically those who come from the root [*shoresh*] of their souls. For all the souls in Adam, the first man, formed one configuration [*partzuf*]. The souls that come down to the world were once included in him alone, and after that they split up.

Righteous people who are close to all those found in this world come to them through the root of their soul, that is if the living person is one of the organs of the soul of the righteous individual. This righteous individual will take trouble over such a soul to guard it, so that it should not sin. In this way it will be rectified and there will be benefit for the righteous individual in that an organ of his soul has been rectified.

Some of those righteous people that come, impregnate the person himself, after the manner of soul impregnation [*ibbur*]. For there is a distinction between reincarnation [*gilgul*] and soul impregnation. Soul impregnation can take place in two different ways. It is either for the sake of rectifying the person impregnated alone, or it is sometimes the case that the soul of the righteous individual impregnates another person in order to rectify itself. For instance, if it needs to rectify the sin of eating forbidden fats [*chelev*][1] or some similar matter. Since it comes to rectify itself, it must have the exercise of free will in its control,[2] and it is possible that it will cause damage rather than rectifying the situation and that one sin will bring another sin in its wake.[3] Thus it is possible that the impregnated person would not have fallen foul of this sin of eating forbidden fats. It was the soul of the righteous individual that impregnated him which caused him to stumble. He was tempted, ate the forbidden fats, incurred the punishment of 'being cut off'

[*karet*] and died. Thus it was the righteous person who killed him. For this [impregnated] body had two souls, the first was his own and the second was the soul of the righteous individual who impregnated him.

THE RIGHTEOUS MEN IN EACH GENERATION

The tradition that in each generation there are at least thirty-six hidden righteous men, known in Yiddish as lamed-vav-niks*, is based around the following teachings. This folk tradition, much beloved of the mystics, is expanded to claim that there are in fact seventy-two of these hidden righteous, divided between the Holy Land and the Diaspora. This fits in with a belief in the seventy-two nations in the world. The hidden righteous men are there to protect the world against the machinations of the angelic princes of the nations. There are also seventy-two letters in the great name of God, and the biblical Sanhedrin of seventy elders with Moses and Aaron make up seventy-two.*

The Thirty-Six Righteous Men

'TB', Sukkah 45b; also 'TB', Sanhedrin 97b

Did not Abaye say: The world never has less than thirty-six righteous men who receive the face of the Divine Presence *[Shekhinah]* every day, for it is said, 'Happy are they that wait for Him [*lo*].'[1] The numerical value *[gematriya]* of 'for Him' is thirty-six.

The Seventy-Two Righteous in Each Age

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 21, p. 50b

The Torah has a head, a body, a heart, a mouth and organs just as these exist among the People of Israel. Among them are the head, who are heads of the people. Among them are eyes, as mentioned in the verse, 'And it shall be as if something was done in error, hidden

from the eyes of the congregation.'[2] Among them are the heart, which is represented by the seventy elders of the Sanhedrin, with Moses and Aaron over them. The world cannot continue [to exist] if those [representing the heart] are missing from the world.[3] This is reflected in the saying, 'I have revealed myself to my heart.'[4] The rest[5] are like the other organs of the body about which we have learnt, 'I have not revealed myself to my organs.'[6] Similarly in the Torah there are seventy different interpretations[7] which depend on the two Torahs, the Written Torah and Oral Torah.

In exile 'Their heart is divided.'[8] This refers to the seventy-two righteous people, who are like the elders of the Sanhedrin. The secret of the matter is found in the verse, 'Happy are they that wait for Him [*lo*].'[1] The numerical value [*gematriya*] of 'for Him' adds up to thirty-six. These are the thirty-six in the Land of Israel and the thirty-six in the Diaspora. This is why it says, 'Their heart is divided.'

The *Tzaddikim* of Each Generation

'Megalleh Amukot', Lech Lecha, by Nathan Nata Spira

The mysticism of numbers, gematriya*, was very important for Kabbalists. Spira sees the number of hidden righteous men in each generation reflected in a verse where Abraham divides an offering to God into two halves, thus establishing a covenant with Him.*

'And he [Abraham] took for himself [*lo*] all of these [*eleh*] and he divided them in the midst.'[2] Here God showed to Abraham His throne, which consists of the seventy-two righteous who need to be in every generation. [Half of] these opposite the other half. [The half of] these in the Land of Israel being thirty-six and [the other half of] these in the Diaspora also being thirty-six.… This is because of the quality of Abraham which is compassion [*chesed*].[3] Therefore, he divided them in the midst. Half of them are a chariot [*merkabah*] in the Land of Israel, which is on the right side, and half of them are a chariot in the Diaspora which is on the left side.

THE NATURE OF THE *TZADDIK*

The *Tzaddik*'s Teaching and Its Interpretation

'Mishnat Chabad', vol. 2, Beer Hachasidut, Sippurim Ketanim, p. 156, section 8, by Eliezer Steinman

This story illustrates, in a striking way, the distinction between the Kabbalist sage as mystic and the Kabbalist sage as a scholar.

Once Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the Tzemach Tzedek, gave a lecture about a certain subject, and Rabbi Hillel of Parits[1] repeated it word for word and also added [his own] interpretation to it. A senior Chasid who was present disagreed with the interpretation of Rabbi Hillel, and gave his own interpretation. An argument between them began, and that Chasid suggested that they go and ask the opinion of the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek. The latter decided that the interpretation of the Chasid was correct. Rabbi Hillel said: 'When the Rebbe is saying words of Torah, then the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] speaks out of his throat. After that, however, when the Rebbe is explaining the plain meaning [*peshat*][2] and giving interpretations, he is just a Jew who understands Chasidic teaching, and every Jew can disagree with his interpretation of the plain meaning.'

The *Tzaddik* and the Commandments

'Pri Etz Chaim', shaar Ha-amidah, anaf 19, by Chaim Vital

When a person performs commandments [*mitzvot*] and also sins, sometimes the sins push away the reward of the commandments so that they do not reach the person. They are given to a righteous person [*tzaddik*] for whom they are fitting, This is the secret meaning of the verse:

> He [the wicked one] prepares it but the righteous person will put it on.[1] There are, however, great righteous people who, even if they take up these commandments and the angels and lights which are made from them, nevertheless they return them to their original owners and only want their own [merits]. They are trustworthy and return the pledge to their owners. So when their owners repent they willingly return their souls to them. Therefore, we pray that our portion and the portion of our commandments and good deeds that we may lose through our bad deeds may be put with illustrious, righteous

and pious people, so that they will remain in existence for us… when we return to Him, may God guard us.

The *Tzaddik* and the World to Come

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Tisa

Here the Kabbalist expresses the yearning of the soul for God in the spiritual life after death, for which all the travails of this life are a means.

The true security which the righteous person [*tzaddik*] asks for in this world is the continued life of the soul in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], to see the light of the face of the King of Life, for that is the goal of the hope of the righteous. For this security the righteous suffer all sorts of torments and after that the punishment of the pain of death. All this is to see His glory, may He be blessed, which they could not see during their lifetime.

The *Tzaddik* in This World and in the Next

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 43

The true life of the individual is a spiritual one, not merely attached to the body.

People should not imagine that the righteous, when they die and sleep in the dust, are free from the service of God and from unifying Him, heaven forbid. For they unify Him continuously in the mystery of their higher soul [*neshamah*], and of their spirit [*ruach*] and their vital soul [*nefesh*], which ascend heavenward.… How much more at midnight when the Holy One, blessed be He, amuses himself joyfully with the mystery of the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden. Not only that but they [the souls] also engage in spiritual sexual union in the Garden of Eden and give birth to souls for converts… The mystery of their divine service and unifications, while they were alive, progresses, renews itself and adds power above day by day, and they make the infinite light in the world of Emanation [*Atzilut*] shine each day more than its fellow. After their death, however, they continue unifications which they had already

engaged in while they were alive. They also pray there for the living.

The *Tzaddik* Has No Rest

'Likkutei Shas' (Berakhot 64a)

Life does not end with death: it continues in reincarnation or in the spiritual life of the soul in the afterlife, which is modelled on the religious life of man in this world.

'Sages have no rest either in this world or in the World to Come.'[1] The issue is that in the world after death sages engage in Torah and ascend from level to level, from academy to academy, for even Moses our Teacher every single day ascends and grasps more. Just as God has no limits so His Torah has no limits. This is the mysterious meaning of the verse, 'Man goes out to his work, and to his labour until the evening.'[2] For when a man goes out of this world, he first goes out to his work, that is to say to engage in the Torah which he had worked on in this world, and after that to his labour, he labours there and exerts himself, until evening, that is to say that he finishes with this world, which is like evening. Thus in the future after the Resurrection they will have rest, and the earth will be filled with knowledge for each person, according to his own level.

1 'TB', Berakhot 64a.

2 Psalm 104:23.

Martyrdom and Sacrifice of the *Tzaddikim*

'Shaar Hahakdamot' 33, by Chaim Vital

Death is not only part of a process of rebirth for the Kabbalists, but an opportunity in the struggle between good and evil to deepen the fight against the evil powers.

The mystery of the Ten Martyrs[1] is that this was after the destruction of the Temple when sins increased very greatly and then the Shells [*Kelippot*] took control. There was no power to gather the

holy sparks from the Shells, and the world was destabilized.

Therefore the righteous ones who suffered martyrdom for the sake of the sanctification of the divine Name, gave up their bodies to the Shells to be killed by them. Then their souls were able to separate out and gather together the holy sparks within the Shells, to elevate them through the mystery of the female waters [*mayyin nukvin*].

WATER

Water on the Sabbath

'Bachya ben Asher', Yitro (on Exodus 20:8)

The activities of the living affect the dead, as in this extract about sinners in Purgatory.

[A dead Gentile soul, the father of Turnus Rufus, second-century Roman governor of Judea, speaks from Purgatory (*Gehinnom*):]

1 There is a tradition that ten sages were martyred in Palestine by the Romans in the early centuries of the common era. Although the ten were not all contemporaries, their deaths were regarded as one event, and typological of all Jewish martyrdom.

> Every weekday we are judged and on the Sabbath we rest. On Friday a heavenly voice [*bat kol*] proclaims, 'Leave the wicked alone and let them rest.' There is an angel called Dumah, who is in charge of us and judges us each day. On Saturday night when the prayer services have been completed that angel cries out and says: 'Return, O wicked ones, to Purgatory because Israel has completed the prayer services.'[1]

This quotation from the Midrash explains why all Israel have a custom not to hurry with the concluding prayers on Saturday night but leave them till well after dark and recite them slowly. For this reason our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, have said that it is forbidden to drink water on Friday evening after twilight.

This is found in the Midrash:

> Anyone who drinks water on Friday evening after twilight, behold he steals from the dead.[2]

They mean by this to fix in the soul the belief that the wicked ones of Israel have rest on the Sabbath in Purgatory. When the wicked emerge from Purgatory on Friday evening, they drink water, wash and cool themselves. So if someone [from among the living] drinks water at that time, they say that he steals it from them,[3] and they make the person who drinks into a thief and someone who is lacking in faith.

CHAPTER 7
MEN AND WOMEN

THE BODY

The Three Bodies of Man

'Arba Meot Shekel Kesef' 70

The complex makeup of the individual provided the Kabbalists with a hierarchy of soul elements and a sense of lower and higher dimensions within a human's physical nature.

A person has a physical body within which he has two other [astral] bodies. One of these is a refined, pure body made from Chashmal.[1] It was this that Moses merited at the [burning] bush. The second is that of the Shell of Light,[2] which is made up of the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination, an angel and a demon [*shed*]. This [second body] is known as the animal vital soul [*nefesh*] of good and evil. This is the true body from the Shell of Light. It is the garment of the vital soul, spirit [*ruach*] and higher soul [*neshamah*], and is called the garment of skin.[3] Since it is made up of good and evil, which were intermingled as a result of the sin of Adam, the first man, it is necessary to separate [*berur*] them out. This is done through Torah and the performance of the commandments [*mitzvot*], and is the totality of the acts performed by Israel till the coming of the Messiah.

Being Nice to Lice

'Shaar Hamitzvot' 58

The sense of the holiness of all creatures and of all nature found in Kabbalah can also have its more bizarre aspects.

No creature was created in vain and it is forbidden to kill any creature unnecessarily.

This is also true of lice, which are born and created from bodily sweat; it is not fitting to kill them nor to be disgusted by them at all. This is specifically the case with honest and worthy [*kasher*] people. For these [lice] are created from the extraneous material and waste matter of the person. Therefore, it is a rectification [*tikkun*] and of benefit to that person that these lice are created from the sweat of his body. For his waste matter, extraneous material and Shells [*Kelippot*] have emerged outside [his body]. Therefore, one should not be disgusted by them.

The Body and Cloak (*Chaluka*) of the Rabbis

'Shaarei Kedushah' 1:1

The idea of an inner spiritual garment, closely associated with the real person, which everyone carries under his or her skin is explained.

The body of a person is not the person himself, as far as the body is concerned, for this is called a person's flesh. The body is simply a garment in which the intellectual vital soul [*nefesh ha-sikhlit*] wraps itself; the real person in this world. After people die this garment is removed from them, and they are clothed in a refined, clean, spiritual garment. This is called a Rabbinical Cloak [*Chaluka De-rabbanan*]. Just as a craftsman makes a garment for the body of a person to fit the form of organs of the body, in a similar way He, may He be blessed, has made the body, which is the garment of the soul, with 248 organs and 365 sinews,[1] which bind the body together, in the form of the image of the soul.

The Trembling of Bodily Organs

'Sefer Chasidim' 162

The borderline between a sense of the presence of God in all things, characteristic of Kabbalah, and prohibited magical manipulation of things, including divination, is a very fine one, as in the following from a different kind of mystical text from the German Pietist tradition.

You should know that in the organs of a man's body the Holy One, blessed be He, has engraved all of a man's deeds and what will happen to him. In the twitches of his organs his Creator informs him of all that will come upon him in future, day by day.

One can learn a lot of things from the scriptural saying, 'He will count all my footsteps.'[1]… From this [we learn that] they count all the steps of man, and relate how many steps a man has to go.

You should know that this is surely so for though there is a prohibition on divination, there are signs, but one should not tell others because it might lead them to support sorcery. If a man has an itch on the sole of his foot, as if a louse were biting him, and he desired to scratch it, without any [visible] sore, and after that the itching stops, you should know that he has to go to a place that he does not know, and he is a man who is not used to going there. If his ear itches, then he will hear something new. If the itch is on the skin of the eyelid, he will see or read new writings, which he does not know till then. If the itch is on his tongue, he will speak something new. If the itch is on his eyebrows, he will see men or women whom he has not seen for a long time. If the itch is on his forehead, people will look for him and desire to see him. If the itch is on his shoulders, then new silver or gold will come his way. If the itch is on his nose, he will become angry. If the itch is under his eyes, close to his nose, his eyes will shed tears. And so it is with every organ, an itch tells something new to a person. Who does all this? The Holy One, blessed be He, tells man through the deeds of his organs what will happen to him. Similarly, how many steps he will take and how many sights he will see, and similarly, for the hand how many deeds it will perform. Similarly, with the mouth. Everything is decreed from the Holy One, blessed be He, and according to the manner of his choice, [so] God determines what will happen to him. All of the above mentioned are words of piety and not, God forbid, prohibited sorcery.[1]

Bodily Movements

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Rifruf Evarim, pp. 37–8

This is a slightly different interpretation of bodily movements, seeing them not as signs of the future but as the consequence of sins.

The movements of the organs of each man are according to his measure, whether it is a movement of the head, whether it is a movement of the hands, or of the legs, or of the whole body, everything is according to one's deeds that have caused the expulsion of the soul, whose dwelling place is in the heart, to be driven away from there outside, to one of the organs. Therefore, man is warned that he must be careful about his deeds and not cause the expulsion of his soul, and its being driven away from its dwelling place.… We are forced to say that those movements of the head or of the hands or of the feet, which are caused by a man's sins, that is specifically when they begin after a person has grown up, because then it is relevant to say that they are the consequence of sin. If, however, they exist at the time of birth, then these movements are from the root place of the soul from where it was originally formed.

There are souls formed from the head, or from the arms, or from the thighs, and according to the place of origin of his soul, he has more movement there when he speaks. I write this so that one should not have a problem if one sees a truly righteous person who has a tremor in his head or hands or feet or in his whole body when he speaks. For it is possible that he was born this way, and it is caused by the root of his soul, as we have mentioned.

Suffering and Providence

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 35

Suffering becomes unreal for the mystic when the divine presence in all things is in the forefront of his consciousness.

The main thing for a righteous man [*tzaddik*], when he feels great pain and weakness of mind, is that he should believe, with true belief, that there is no reality, great or small, even in the matter of free choice, where the will of the Master of the World is not hidden in it. That man, therefore, is the agent of God. When a person believes this in truth and accepts things in love and joy, immediately God, may He be blessed, illuminates him with his light, and he tastes the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*] in this world, the brightness of the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*]. To the point that all these things [the pain and suffering] leave no mark on him at

all, and he is full of light, joy and divine energy. Even an ordinary person, whose soul is not so attuned to this, can believe that the Master of the World is there too, with all those who trouble him and undermine his livelihood. It is He, in his very self and glory who is chastising him, like a father does his son. Immediately all the workers of iniquity will leave him and true salvation will come to him, as long as he believes truly, does not speak a word, and accepts everything with love.

Nothingness of the Righteous

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:58

The rejection of egoism is here given a theological twist: the nothingness of the mystic brings him both nearer to God, the great Nothing, but also to the world itself.

There are people who say that when a genuinely righteous man [*tzaddik*] is great in his spiritual level, because of his greatness he is not able to pay attention to and consider people in the world, because he is far from the world. In truth, however, this is not so. On the contrary when a righteous man is very great, he is able to pay attention to and consider the world to a greater degree.… For is not God, may He be blessed, highly elevated and completely beyond the world; nevertheless, he is able to pay attention through divine providence to all of the world. For in truth he who is a part of mundane reality [*yesh*] is not able to be in every place at the same time. For a person who has such a sense of his own reality when he stands here is not entirely here, for instance when he is serving God. Thus he is not able to contemplate the world. But for a person who has a deep sense of his own nothingness, there is no place where he is not, since he occupies no place at all. Therefore, the more that a righteous man is incorporated in nothingness, the more he is able to pay attention to and contemplate the world. For it cannot be said of him that he occupies an elevated place and is distant from the world. For he is in no place at all.

Body and Purity

‘Tikkunei Zohar’, Tikkun 70, p. 130b

For the Kabbalists one role for the commandments is the purification of the soul, enabling it to become a vehicle for the divine.

A person needs to make the Holy One, blessed be He, rule over every organ of his body, and to prepare for God a pure and clean place to rest. Because of this a person needs to eradicate all evil, impure thoughts and feelings, which are Shells [*Kelippot*], from each organ. He needs to burn them out with every correct commandment that applies to each organ, for these commandments are lamps. Each commandment is called a lamp, as it is written, ‘A commandment is a lamp’, and ‘The soul of man is the lamp of the Lord’ and through this it ‘searches out all one’s inward parts’.[1]

THE NATURE OF MAN

The Value of Each Individual

‘Likkutei Shas’ (Avot 4:3)

The doctrine of transmigration, and the belief in the ongoing struggle against the forces of evil, are used to emphasize the status of each individual.

> Do not demean any man, and do not belittle any thing. For there is no man who does not have his hour, and no thing that does not have its place.[1]

You should know that sometimes a person has a soul of great value, yet for some reason he is not able to grasp things properly.[2] This may be because of the generation in which he lives, or for some other reason. Perhaps someone who understands things more clearly than he does will want to demean him. Therefore, it says, ‘Do not demean any person, etc., for there is no person who does not have his hour.’ Although at the moment he may not understand some things, perhaps a time and an hour will come when the Shell [*Kelippah*] which clogs up his intellect will be removed. Then he will be able to understand more than you. Or even if you know that

he would not be able to grasp more than you, nevertheless he is fitting to be honoured. Because perhaps while you have nine portions of soul illumination,[3] he now only has one portion of soul illumination. It may be this that caused you to know more than he. In value, however, since he only has one portion of soul alone, his lesser light is indeed greater. Perhaps in some future reincarnation they will give him illumination from many portions like you, or even more [than you]. Therefore, it says that you should not demean him.

Free Will

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:21:4

The problem of how human freedom can exist if God knows everything that people will do, is one which occupied Jewish philosophers down the ages. The Kabbalists resolved the conflict for themselves by acknowledging that human freedom exists at a mundane level but not at a higher spiritual level.

Know that this is the essential power of free choice. As long as the human intellect is too limited to understand the ideas of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, then the power of free will is in its place. For it has the power to choose life or its opposite.

But when the transcendent divine wisdom enters in,[1] then the human intellect becomes boundless, and when the paradox of divine foreknowledge and human freedom is revealed to humanity, then human freedom is abolished. For human intelligence having increased in capacity has left human boundaries behind and ascended to the dimensions of an angel, then human freedom is nullified. This indeed is the essence of human freedom, when the human intellect does not know about the paradox of divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

Human Independence

'Sneh Boer Bekotsk', p. 257, by Meir Orian, teaching ascribed to Menachem Mendel of Kotsk

One of the cornerstones of Chasidic Kabbalah was the desire to reveal man's unique essence and freedom, as is apparent in the following extracts.

And God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him.[2] Man must guard himself and his uniqueness, and not imitate his fellow, for initially man was created 'in his own image', and only afterwards 'in the image of God'.

Everyone Can Become a Holy Person

'Shivchei Moharan' 25–6

Though believing in great individuals possessing high levels of soul, there was some disagreement about whether they were born or self-made. Here the latter position is strongly advocated.

Every person, through his free will, is able to merit the attainment of a very elevated spiritual level if he wishes. Even though such service of God appears difficult and arduous to him, and the desires and lusts which relentlessly pursue him do not allow him to enter His service, may He be blessed. Nevertheless, he must be obstinate in God's service without paying any attention to all this. For in the stories about Rebbe Nachman, a wise person will understand on his own that even our holy and awesome Rabbi, may the memory of a righteous [*tzaddik*] and holy person be for a blessing, was subject to all these impediments and difficult matters. He went through all of these experiences, and yet he merited shattering them all because he truly wanted to serve God, and he chose life in truth until he merited what he merited.… He said that even if he were not a descendant of the divine Baal Shem Tov,… but rather if he was from the lowliest family of Israel, he would still have merited what he merited through his service of God itself, and through the efforts that he made and the very great exertions he undertook in His service.… He objected strongly to those people who thought that the spiritual level of the righteous person, and the religious consciousness he has merited, are all due to his soul alone, namely because he possesses a very elevated soul. He said that this was not correct and that the main thing depends entirely on good deeds and individual effort in the service of God. He said explicitly that every

person in the world is able to merit a very high spiritual level. It all depends only on human free will, if a person wishes to have compassion on himself, and to focus his own mind very clearly on what is truly good before Him. Everything depends on the extent of one's deeds.[1]

JEWS AND GENTILES

The issue of Jewish identity, and how Jews and Gentiles differ, has been dealt with in Jewish literature from biblical times. Although Judaism has always accepted converts, it has often expressed very negative attitudes to idolatrous Gentile religion, and even to heathen Gentiles themselves. The Kabbalists faced these problems head on in terms of their division of the world into domains of holiness and evil, and categorized Gentiles as belonging to the latter. They then had to deal with the problems of converts, as in the following extracts.

Jews and Heathens

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Evarim

Here the main distinction between Jews and Gentiles is seen in terms of the commandments of God.

Israel specifically is called 'man', and the heathen nations of the world are not, for they are compared to animals. For behold the commandment [*mitzvah*] associated with each organ of a person's body is a soul which gives light to it, as it is written, 'For the commandment is a lamp, etc.'[2] This is apart from the light of the soul which shines in general throughout all the organs of the body. Thus we find that included in every Israelite there are a number of souls, one for each organ, and one for the generality of the whole body. Therefore, they are called alive, for each detail is enlivened from its own individual soul, which is the commandment which shines through it. The soul itself is called 'the lamp of the Lord, the soul of man'.[3] This is not true for the heathen nations of the world which lack the commandments of the Torah. So all they have is the animal spirit, like an animal, throughout all their organs.

Therefore, the wicked even when they are alive are called dead, since they have removed from themselves the yoke of the commandments. They lack the souls within each organ as we have said, so their organs are dead. The righteous even when they are dead are called living for the commandments accompany them in the grave, as the Mishnaic authority taught: 'The only things that accompany man after death are commandments and good deeds, etc.'[1] Every commandment rests on each organ when it is in the grave, and this is the soul, so he is alive.

Jews, Not Gentiles, Called 'Man'

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 1

Here the distinction between Jews and Gentiles goes back to the origins of their souls in the great soul of Adam, the first man.

'You are Adam.'[2] You are called 'man' but idolaters are not called 'man'.[3] The explanation of this is that all higher souls *[neshamot],* spirits *[ruchot]* and vital souls *[nefashot],* all of them were included in Adam, the first man, when he was created. There are those vital souls which are dependent on the head of Adam, those dependent on his eyes, those dependent on his orifices, and similarly with all his organs. Thus at the beginning of the creation of Adam, the first man, all the souls from the side of good were included in him and dependent upon him. After he sinned and mixed good with evil, then good and evil in general were intermingled. After that, from the evil portion idolaters emerged. So that the essential part of Adam was the good, which consisted of the souls of Israel. That is why it is said, 'You are Adam.' That means to say that the generality of your souls are Adam, that is Adam, the first man. You are his sparks and his organs. That is also why Israel is called 'One Nation', as the scriptural verse, 'Who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the land.'[1] Idolaters, however, are not called Adam, the explanation is that they were only formed from the evil portion that was intermingled in Adam, the first man.

Revelation to the Gentiles

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 1:10:3

Although Gentiles are thought to have natural forms of religion, these have in the past led to polytheism and heathen practices. Here the revelation to the Gentiles comes from the Patriarch Jacob, rather than from the contemplation of the wonders of nature.

Gentiles only know the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, through the aspect of the biblical Patriarch Jacob. As it says in scripture, ‘House of Jacob come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.’[2] For Jacob revealed the divinity of the Holy One, blessed be He, more than the other Patriarchs.[3] The Patriarch Abraham referred to God as a mountain, and the Patriarch Isaac referred to God as afield.[4] Now a field is more comprehensible and more essential to the world than a mountain. Jacob referred to God as a house,[5] which is a more suitable place for people to dwell than a field. That is Jacob called the place of the Temple, which is the place of prayer, ‘a house’, which is a dwelling place for people. He raised prayer from mountain and field to the aspect of ‘house’, which people can grasp more than mountain and field.

For Gentiles can also have a comprehension of God in His aspect of house, as it says, ‘For My house will be called a House of Prayer for all peoples.’[1]

Maintaining Jewish Identity among the Gentiles

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 1:244

The Gentile world is a temptation for the Jew, who has to maintain his religious integrity while mixing with ordinary people, heathens and idolaters.

A person who is involved with the world of heathens and idolaters, namely he has dealings and business with them, needs to guard himself very much so that this will not cause him any damage. For it is easy to be caught in their net, heaven forbid, and to separate himself from the level of Jewishness which he possesses. Man finds himself in this lowly world, where even angels do not have the power to exist, as we find that angels once came into this world and they became completely ensnared.[2]

Yet in truth Israel has more power than the angels. They are able to exist in the mundane world, to overcome this world and to cleave to the Creator, may His name be blessed. To be involved with heathens and idolaters, however, is very difficult.

Therefore, it is necessary to guard oneself very, very much. One needs to be as firm as a pillar and not to move away from the level of one's maintenance of the dietary laws [*kashrut*] and one's Jewishness.

The Evil Other Side *(Sitra Achra)* and Gentiles

'Zohar Chadash', Ruth 78c-d, Maamar Kmo Sheyesh Shem Bikdushah

An unknown Kabbalist gives a very strong critique of the sexual practices of the Jews of his era, of Jewish 'demons' and of the heathen women by whom they are tempted. The religious beliefs of Islam and Christianity are not spared.

Just as there is a name of holiness so there is also a name of uncleanness, which is impure. Concerning this it is written: 'You shall have no other gods before me.'[1] Anyone who desecrates any of his organs below, it is as if he commits a desecration above. Because of this the sword, famine and death come into the world, as the verse says, 'My anger shall be kindled and I will kill you by the sword. Your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.'[2] This refers to a person who places the holy covenant[3] in another domain. Similarly it says,… 'Cursed be he who lies with an animal.'[4] What is 'an animal'? That is a heathen woman, a body which is from the impure animal dimension, the other side above. That is why it says, 'See I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.'[5] 'Life and good' refers to the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, while 'death and evil' is the name of Samael, the soul of the soul *[neshamah* of the *neshamah]* of the left side. When the soul, spirit and life force of the left side are in a body, this is not called a human.[6] What does the verse say? 'You shall choose life.'[1] Because of this [we can understand that] there are Jewish demons.[2]

While the verse, 'You shall have no other gods', refers to [the deities of] Ishmael and Esau. From what place do these other gods

of Ishmael and Esau come? They come from the dregs of the Jewish demons.[3] Concerning this it is written, 'For from the root of the Serpent went forth a viper.'[4] Therefore, if your evil inclination [*yetzer hara*] tells you to sin and lie with an animal, do not listen to it.

Gentiles and the Torah

'Zohar' 3:72b–73a, Acharei Mot

The election of Israel and circumcision makes Israelite males suitable to study the holy Torah. This is not true of Gentiles, who have not been called by God, and not been circumcised.

Rabbi Abba said: Happy is the portion of Israel for the Holy One, blessed be He, has selected them from among all idolatrous nations, and because of His love for them He gave them true laws, planted the Tree of Life with them and made the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] dwell among them. What is the reason? Because Israel is marked with the holy sign of circumcision[5] in their flesh. They are known as His[6] and as sons of His temple. Because of this all of those who do not have this holy sign in their flesh are not His, and it is known that they all come from the side of impurity. It is forbidden to associate with them, or to discuss Torah matters with them. It is also forbidden to impart to them the knowledge of the Torah, because the whole Torah is the name of the Holy One and every letter of the Torah is attached to the Holy One.

Thus it is forbidden to impart the knowledge of the Torah to any person who is not marked with the holy sign in his flesh, and obviously one cannot discuss it with them.

Rabbi Simeon opened his discourse with the words:

> This is the statute of the Passover, no stranger may eat of it. Every servant who is bought for money when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. The sojourner and the hired servant shall not eat it.[1]

The Passover offering, which is meat to be eaten, cannot be eaten by these and can only be eaten once they are circumcised, because it hints at something holy. The Torah, which is the Holy of Holies,

the celestial name of the Holy One, how much more so is it prohibited to them.… Happy is Israel for the Holy One has planted this holy heavenly portion among them. As the verse says, 'For I have given a goodly doctrine to you.'2 To you and not to the idolatrous nations. Since the Torah is a very valuable celestial hidden entity, literally the divine name, it is all both hidden and revealed according to the mystery of God's name. Therefore, Israel too has two levels, a hidden one and a revealed one. We have learnt there are three entities which are bound to one another: the Holy One, blessed be He, the Torah, and Israel. Each one has a stage beyond a stage, hidden and revealed.… To everyone who has been circumcised, and has been marked with the holy name, one can give the revealed words of the Torah. That is, one informs them of the words and of the chapter headings, and one gives them some of the stricter commandments of the Torah but nothing more until they ascend to another level.… For these are the mysteries, the statutes and secrets of the Torah, which should not be revealed except to those of a higher and suitable level. If this is true of Israel itself, how much more so is it true of idolatrous nations. If one gives even a small amount of the Torah to someone who is not circumcised, it is as if one destroyed the world and negated the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, since they all depend on it and are interrelated. As the verse says, 'Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would never have established the ordinances of heaven and earth.'[1]

MALE AND FEMALE

The Hebrew language has no neutral case, and any object is either male or female. Although in Judaism God is always talked about in masculine terms, for the Kabbalists God and the world are structured out of male and female aspects. Here the emphasis is on both the male and the female.

Male and Female Soul Mates

'Zohar' 3:43 b, Tazriya

All spirits of the world are made up of male and female. When they come forth into the world, they come forth as male and female. After that they split up in their own ways. If a person is worthy then they will unite together, that is he will find his soul partner and unite with her in one unity, affecting everything, spirit and body. As it is written: 'Let the earth bring forth a living soul after its kind.'[2] What is 'after its kind'? That is the human spirit that comes forth with a partner, which is like it.

Male and Female Blessings

'Zohar' i:i82a-b, Vayeshev

So his appearance was disfigured, unlike that of a man.[3]

As it is said in Scripture: 'I clothe the heavens with darkness, and cover them with sackcloth.'[4]

For from the day that the Temple was destroyed, the heavens [*Zeir Anpin*] did not exist in their own light. The secret being that a blessing only rests on a place where male and female are found together in unison. As it is said in Scripture: 'Male and female he created them, and blessed them.'[1] It is to this that the verse refers when it says: 'So his appearance was disfigured, unlike that of a man'[2]… Because of this at that time when the Male Aspect of the divine is not in union with the Female [*Shekhinah*], then all the souls which emerge [from Her into the world] are changed from what they were when the sun was united with the moon.

SEXUAL RELATIONS

Sexual Intercourse and Holiness

'Tikkunei Hateshuvah' 14, by Isaac Luria

Each human activity can be performed in holiness, making it a religiously charged act, none more so than sexual relations between husband and wife. This is particularly true because of the effect it has on any children produced.

A man should not have sexual intercourse except on the evening before the Sabbath,[3] before a festive day [*yomtov*] and before a New Moon [*Rosh Chodesh*]. Similarly, on the night that his wife bathes in the ritual bath.[4] The day before he has sexual relations he should increase his participation in fulfilling commandments [*mitzvot*], studying Torah and performing deeds of kindness more than on other days. He should do this with all his might and confess his sins with a whole heart. This is in order to merit to draw down holy souls, fitting to be seed blessed by God, as his seed after him.

Sex, Holiness and the Spiritual Garment

'Shulchan Arukh Ha-Ari' 26, by Jacob Tzemach

The creation of a child through sexual intercourse is a highly charged act, since the nature of the child depends on the state of mind of the parents. They provide the semi-spiritual garment through which the soul is active.

You should know that there is no person whose soul is not wrapped up in the soul garment [*malbush*], which comes from his father and his mother. This garment helps him perform commandments [*mitzvot*]. Through this you will understand how stringent the Torah was in requiring a person to sanctify themself at the time of sexual intercourse. If a person does sanctify themself they will draw down to that soul a holy garment through which they will merit serving God. Even a great soul still needs the sanctification of its parents at the time they have sexual intercourse. For without this, on the contrary, the garment can damage him like the Evil Inclination [*yetzer hara*], and we find that if he transgresses then his sins will be considered the responsibility of his father.

Prayer as Sexual Union with the Divine Presence

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot

The imagery of sexual union with the divine to describe mystical activity was particularly favoured by the Chasidic Kabbalists, but their remarks caused shock and consternation to their opponents.

Prayer is sexual union with the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*]. Just as in the beginning of sexual intercourse one engages in a rocking motion, so in the beginning of prayer one needs to rock oneself, and afterwards one stands thus without moving, attached to the Divine Presence with great attachment. From the power of engaging in the rocking motion a person can come to a great spiritual awakening. For they will think why am I rocking myself, surely the Divine Presence stands opposite me. From this they will come to great fervour.

SILENCE

Silence and Wisdom

'Pri Etz Chaim', Hanhagot Halimmud

The mystics believed in the power of words, because the world was created through it. Yet silence was highly valued, as was the song without words.

When it comes to acquiring wisdom the first condition is to limit one's speech and to remain silent as much as one is able, not to engage in any vain chatter. As our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, say: 'Silence is a protective fence for wisdom.'[1]

Asceticism: No Vain Talk for Forty Days

'Pri Etz Chaim', Hanhagot Halimmud

Though words are creative and holy, silence brings the mystic closer to God.

A person who can remain for forty days without speaking any idle talk *[sichah beteilah]* will certainly achieve the level of the Holy Spirit *[Ruach Ha-Kodesh],* without any doubt.

Rebbe Mendel of Warka on Silence

Silence, which goes beyond the mundane level of words, was very important for all mystics, but especially for the Chasidic master Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka (1819-68), known as 'the Silent Tzaddik. *He would go for long periods without saying a word, and would rarely teach Torah in words but would prefer to sit in silence with his followers. His Chasidim used to say that 'in Warka we serve God in thought'. Specializing in song and dance Rebbe Mendel Kalish left behind only a few short teachings. One of his disciples said that the few words of his master enabled him to understand whole sections of the Kabbalah that he had studied over a long period of time and not understood. The following selections are from his teachings, mostly about silence.*

Sleep and Awe

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 131

There is a phrase in a synagogue hymn [*piyyut*] that says, 'sleep does not exist before Him'.[1] Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka interpreted this to mean that those who feel themselves to be before God are not able to sleep.

Silent Prayer

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 137

And she opened [it] and saw the lad, behold a child crying.[2]

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka said: One should notice that it really should have said that she heard [the child] rather than she saw [him]. From here we have a hint about the subject of prayer, which needs to be from the depths of the heart, and not heard aloud.

And she said: This is one of the Hebrew children.[3]

For this is the nature of Jewish prayer, 'a silent, muted, cry'.[4]

Nothing and Torah

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 139

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka said:

> If two people sit together and there is nothing between them [of] words of Torah.[1]

This can be interpreted to mean that if there is nothing of hate between them, rather they sit together in love and friendship, then this in itself may be considered 'words of Torah'. Another explanation is that if there is indeed nothing[2] between them except humility and simpleness, then this itself may be considered 'words of Torah'.

A Time to Speak

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 144

When they asked Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka why he said so few words of Torah, he referred to the verse… 'Behold she [Hannah] spoke in her heart.'[3] When did she speak in her heart? When the words welled up, ascended and broke forth from the heart, so it was impossible to restrain them any more. Similarly a *Tzaddik* who relates Torah to Israel should be at this level.

Three Hidden Qualities

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 151

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka used to say: There are three beautiful things: bending down while remaining upright, a cry while remaining silent and a dance without moving.

Holding Back from Torah

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 155

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka said: If people wish to express 'the voice of God', that is to relate words of Torah, then they need to hold back from speaking. For even God Himself waited more than

two thousand years before giving the Torah[1] in the wilderness.

The Silent Cry

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 158

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka said: 'And God heard the voice of the lad.'[2] Where are we told that Ishmael actually cried out? Rather we must be dealing here with 'a silent cry'.

Finding the Hidden God

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 158

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka used to say about the verse, 'And I will surely hide my face',[3] this is like the 'hide and seek' game which children play, where one child hides and cries out, 'I am hidden.' A clever child is able to find where his friend is hidden by the sound of his voice. The same is true of an intelligent person who hears God declare, 'I will hide myself.' He needs to foster this voice within him and to seek Him until he finds Him.

Nullifying the Self

'Hatzaddik Hashotek', p. 169

Rebbe Mendel Kalish of Warka told his Chasidim, when sitting down with them at a Sabbath meal, that they were like sacrifices to God, for they have nullified themselves. Although fasting itself is like a sacrifice since it involves the 'diminishing of one's fat and blood', there is a greater level [of sacrifice] in the meal of Chasidim eating together when the nullification comes through joy.

SOUL

Greatness of the Soul

‘Shaarei Kedushah’ 3:2

For the Kabbalists the soul of man is a part of the divine at its ultimate level.

The greatness of the soul is that it is a light, born and drawn forth from the Ten *Sefirot* themselves without any intermediaries. Thus people are referred to as ‘You are children of the Lord our God.’[1] For they are like a child completely attached to its father and obtaining things from him. This is the secret meaning of the idea that the Patriarchs[2] are a base [*merkabah*]3 for the light of the Ten *Sefirot* which rides on them without the intermediary of any other light.… Behold the light of souls is a garment for the light of the Ten *Sefirot*… for He gathers the souls of the righteous which smell as sweet as lilies through their deeds in this world, and He gathers them up to clothe His light in them.… This also explains the nature of the Good Inclination [*Yetzer Tov*] and the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] in a person. For they are two inclinations added to a person apart from the soul, and they are a light from the light of the angels which is called the Good Inclination and a light from the light of the Shells [*Kelippot*] which is called the Evil Inclination.… The soul of a person, however, is more inward than they are. Because it is more inward and because it is called the essential person, therefore, a person has the choice to turn to whichever direction he wants, for he is greater than they are. The principal direction to which an individual turns is to the Good Inclination, because he is holy like it and also closer to it. The physical body, however, is mainly inclined to the Evil Inclination, for both of them[1] are from the side of evil and they are close to one another. In this matter there is a conflict between physical nature and the soul, for since the soul cannot activate the commandments [*mitzvot*] except through the agency of the body, which is more inclined to the Evil Inclination, it is very difficult to subdue them.[2] Thus it has been explained that the free choice of the soul is able to be directed to the Good Inclination. Since it needs the activities of the body, however, it takes great effort to subdue the Evil Inclination.

Soul in Children

‘Etz Chaim’, shaar 39, derush 5

The Kabbalah regards the human soul as made of different levels. The first of the three main levels, the vital soul, exists in many forms of life. The next two, spirit and higher soul, depend on a person's spiritual development.

When a child is born and emerges into the atmosphere of the world, only the aspect of the vital soul [*nefesh*] is actively revealed. The spirit [*ruach*] and the higher soul [*neshamah*] are there in a passive state and are not active. They are without physical embodiment.[3] Through involvement with Torah and commandments [*mitzvot*] a garment is made for them, so that then they too are embodied and revealed in an active way.

Soul Levels

'Yalkut Reuveni' 3:383, by Abraham Reuben Katz, from 'Megalleh Amukot', Va-Etchanan, by Nathan Nata Spira

Higher levels of the soul only exist in certain special individuals.

Behold man has become like one of us.[1]

There are five aspects of the soul: the vital soul [*nefesh*], the spirit [*ruach*], the higher soul [*neshamah*], the living soul [*chayah*] and the singular soul [*yechidah*]. No person has ever merited possessing the dimension of the singular soul except Adam, the first man, that is why Scripture says 'he has become like one of us'.[2] 'Like one' specifically because he merited a singular soul. Moses also merited this when he stood on Mt Sinai… and he contemplated the brightness of the supernal wisdom. At the time of the Golden Calf, however, it was taken from him and he was left only with the living soul.

Soul Roots and Torah

'Shulchan Arukh Ha-Ari' 22

The soul of each Israelite represents a different interpretation of the Torah. Great souls can grasp multiple interpretations, and Moses could grasp all of them.

The generality of all souls adds up to 600,000.[3] The Torah is the root of the souls of Israel. Therefore there are 600,000 different interpretations of the Torah in relation to them, one for each of them. From there the roots of the soul of each person of Israel come into being. In future times each person in Israel will read and know the whole Torah, according to the interpretation which applies to his [soul] root. For it was through this [root] that he was created, and so it is in the Garden of Eden [*Gan Eden*]. There are some souls which incorporate a number of different interpretations, and the soul of Moses our Teacher incorporated all 600,000 interpretations, that is why he knew all 600,000 interpretations [of the Torah].

The Soul, the Shell (*Kelippah*) and Adam's Sin

'Shaar Hagilgulim', Introduction 23, by Chaim Vital

The battle between good and evil, between holiness and the power of the 'Other Side', goes back to the sin of Adam and the entrapment of human souls among the Shells.

All souls were included in the soul of Adam, the first man, before he sinned.… When he sinned his limbs fell away from him. These [limbs] were the souls that were included in him, and they fell into the depths of the Shells [*Kelippot*]… The limbs more attached to the sin of Adam fell into a deeper place among the Shells than the other limbs which were more distant from that blemish.… We find that the place of their fall into the depths of the Shells was according to the importance of the blemish of the soul.…

Just as there is an Adam of Holiness so there is an Adam of Evil [Adam Belial] of the Shells, who [also] has 248 limbs and 365 sinews. According to the limbs that sinned with Adam, the first man, so the limbs of the parallel Adam of Evil took those souls that were made from Adam, and clothed them among the Shells… There is no soul which does not have a certain aspect of a Shell,… which relates to it, according to its aspect and relative to the level of its sin while it was included in Adam when he sinned. That Shell enclothes it and wraps round it all the days of its life. Because the holy and spiritual soul is enclothed in this filthy Shell… this separates the soul and the Lord God from whom it was hewn. The light which is drawn down to it from Him, may He be blessed,

ceases to be drawn and does not shine in it because of the Shell which surrounds it. This is hinted at by what the Sages said:

> The serpent had sexual relations with Eve and injected filth into her.[1]

This is also true of Adam and of his descendants until the time of the Messiah. No man is saved from it, since all of them were included in Adam, the first man, when he sinned. This is a common factor in all souls. Even those who died merely through the instigation of the serpent[2] had in them the injected filth.… It is [also] certain that while man draws upon himself the Shell and the filth of the Serpent, according to the significance of his own sin, this all depends on human repentance. For through repentance he can push away the filth that attaches itself to him through his sins, even if they are great sins.

The filth and the Shell which attached itself to all souls when Adam sinned is not amenable to repentance, and people are forced to die because the blemish will only be rectified through death [itself]. Although the Holy One, blessed be He, accepted the repentance of Adam, and his sin was atoned for, nevertheless, the filth and the Shell that attached themselves to him when he sinned were not removed or separated from him except after death. The reason for this is that the sin of Adam was exceptionally grave… This is the secret meaning of the Rabbinic teaching that some died merely through the instigation of the Serpent,[3] which means through the filth of the Serpent which was injected into Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, one still has to explain the reason why death separates off the Shell from humans.

You should know that holiness is called life… because the Holy One gives abundance and sustenance to all his creatures. The Other Side [*Sitra Achra*], however, which removes the abundance and the life from created beings, is called death.…

Therefore that Shell only separates itself from humans after death, for then a person is buried, his flesh is consumed in the dust, and the Shell, which attached itself to him in the filth of the Serpent which it injected into Eve and Adam, separates from him.

Soul and Shells

‘Sefer Hachezyonot’, by Chaim Vital

The level of holiness achieved by a person depends on himself. He needs to overcome his own Evil Inclination, and the evil which abounds in his generation or in the situation in which he lives.

Rabbi Chaim Vital said:

Once I asked my master [Rabbi Luria], may his memory be for a blessing, how he could say to me that my soul was of such a high level, when the lowliest of early generations was so righteous and pious that I do not reach to their ankles.

He said to me: You should know that the greatness of the soul does not depend on the deeds of man which appear to the eyes. For God, may He be blessed, tests the hearts and the kidneys, according to the period and the generation. A very lowly deed in this generation can be as weighty as several commandments [*mitzvot*] in earlier generations. For in these generations the Shell [*Kelippah*] and evil are very dominant, without end and without measure. This was not true in earlier generations. If I, Chaim, had lived in those generations, then my deeds and my wisdom would be wonderful and would transcend those of many of the early righteous ones… of the time of the Tannaim and Amoraim,[1] therefore I am not troubled by this at all.…

Now if at the time of Rabbi Isaac Luria the Shell was so dominant, what shall we say, what words shall we speak, in this our bitter time. Certainly we should kiss everyone who is an Israelite and generate love and merit for them.

Worldly Occupation, Suffering and God

‘Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav’, p. 51

The forces of evil test a person but overcoming them increases the power of good.

It is necessary to warn a person that when he is preoccupied with his own suffering, heaven forbid, and subject to anxiety and the confusion of his thoughts, he should not become alienated from Torah and prayer. For when he overcomes this [concern] to remove his anxieties, which are the work of the Evil Inclination *[Yetzer*

Hara] to confuse him, and he subdues and breaks his Evil Inclination, the prayer that results is the choicest of prayers. When a person has no worldly anxieties, his prayer is not as intense as that of someone who has many confusions from the Evil Inclination, and who overcomes them. This is explained in the Zohar… 'There is no light except that which emerges from darkness.'[1] This is tried and tested by the truly righteous and pious… The efforts of the flesh and the anxious confusion caused by the Evil Inclination should not cause alienation or delay, for on the contrary when one overcomes them, then… this results in the choicest and most intense of prayers and good deeds which you should give to God.

Faults Lie Within

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 32

Introspection and self-criticism are a necessary part of spiritual growth for the Kabbalist.

The Rabbis say that the verse 'It is not an empty thing from you'[2] means that if it is an empty thing, then this is because of you. For they interpret the words 'from you' to mean that you are the cause.[3] Thus if anything is too hard for you to grasp, then it is because of you. It was in your own hands. For the Torah is the inheritance of all Israel and when it hides its face from a certain individual, that is because of a particular sin, transgression or some negative thing that is found within him. Therefore, the remedy for this according to the Sages of Truth1 is that for anything in the Torah that one does not understand, one should repent and weep tears.

There is an oral tradition from the righteous sages [*tzaddikim*] of our generation that in everything that a person sees and hears he is being shown a reflection of himself from above. For instance, if one sees someone transgressing, heaven forbid, then the person who sees it has within himself a reflection of that sin. For if this were not within him, he would not have been shown this from heaven.

Worldly Occupations and God

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 51

For the true mystic the world itself is eclipsed by the sense of God's presence.

One needs great diligence in serving sages and the great ones of Israel, and to hear their words which are spoken in truth. From them one learns to understand and to be wise, to remove physicality from each thing and to look only at its spirituality. The life and brightness of the Creator should always be before one's eyes, and thus one will not see anything else, as it is written, 'I have set the Lord always before me', and it is further written, 'There is none beside him.'[2]

Once a certain man came before me with a complaint. He said, I very much want to serve the Creator, blessed be He, and to cleave to the righteous and listen to their words. Only I am very occupied with worldly matters, and because of this I do not know anything and am far from the Creator of the world. I replied to him, Behold the Creator of the world, may His name be blessed; there is no limit to His greatness and all the worlds are like a mustard seed before Him. So how is it possible that this world and its small and insignificant matters,… should stand and cover and hide one from contemplating this great and awesome Creator.

With righteous people, however, it is the opposite. For what is true and correct is that they are occupied with, submerged in and cleaving to the clear light of the Creator, blessed be He, and His life force which is in each thing and each place, as already mentioned. They do not see anything except for Him, and it is He who covers and hides this world in front of them.

The Soul of a Vessel

'Kitvei Kodesh', p. 26a, by Moshe Hakohen

Kabbalists were able to see beyond the surface of things to their underlying reality, as illustrated here.

There was an incident with the Besht, peace be upon him, who was giving a lesson in his usual manner when he said that physical objects are entirely made of dust, which may be joined together through human agency. He said that matter was of a simple material kind but the essence was the form, which was of the nature

of ‘the final product was there in the first thought’.[1]

Therefore, the vessel receives man’s wisdom, that is the life force of a man is received in the life of the vessel. There is in the vessel an emanated intellect from the craftsman; therefore, one can recognize in the vessel itself all the behaviour and good of the craftsman. For it is known that in a branch there is the power of the root. This is sufficient for those who understand.

Before him stood a beautiful jug of beer and he used to say that there can be found in this vessel its essence. I can see that the craftsman who made it had no legs. So we find that the combination of this vessel comes from the power of emanation and from the intellect; if we remove the intellect from this vessel, then this vessel would have no construction.

After the lesson was over one student took the jug in his hand to place it on the stool, and immediately when he put the vessel down, it shattered into pieces as it was originally.

Singers and Sin

‘Or Hameir’, Haazinu, by Zev Volf of Zhitomir

A person’s sins may be manifested through the non-rational aspects of his character, specifically music and song.

I have heard in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing for life in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], that on one occasion he heard a wicked man playing the fiddle, and he understood all of the sins that the fiddler had performed from the day he was born. If a fiddle can make a person’s sins explicit, how much more so when a person sings a song with his mouth. From the tune that he sings an enlightened person, gifted with insight, can know all the sins that he [the singer] has done. This is because he puts all of the power of his strength into the tune which he brings out of his mouth. If so this is an open rebuke for cantors [*chazzonim*] and musicians, removing the veil of shame from their faces, when they perform in front of sages and men of knowledge. This is specially true of those who stand in front of the reader’s desk [*tevah*], in Houses of Study [*bet hamidrash*] or Synagogues [*bet ha-keneset*], without understanding that they are exposing their own

shame, with their mouths, through their tunes.

Man and the World

'Zohar' 1:90b, Lech Lecha

The sense of fate, life determined by God, is a forceful one for the Kabbalists.

Rabbi Chiya said: Come and see. How great are the works of the Holy One, blessed be He. For the craft and form of a man is a microcosm of the structure of the world.

Every single day the Holy One creates the world and brings couples together in an appropriate manner. He forms the pattern of each unborn creature before it comes into the world. As Rabbi Simeon said: It is written, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam.'[1] Did he have a book? Rather we have learnt that the Holy One showed the first man each generation and its interpreters. How did he show him?

If you say that He showed him by the means of the Holy Spirit that these were appointed to come into the world, like one who perceives through his wisdom what is going to come into the world, this is not correct. Rather he saw it all with his eyes.

That is he actually saw all of those forms of things that were appointed to come into the world with his eyes. How was this? Because from the day the world was created, all the souls that were appointed to become human beings existed before the Holy One in the very form that they will adopt in the world.

The Thought Is the Man

'Keter Shem Tov', section 283, vol. 2, p. 73

Thinking has its own reality for Chasidic mystics.

When a person thinks about evil things which are from the Side of Judgement [*Sitra De-dina*], then he contracts his thought into these evil words, and distances himself from the spread of the upper compassion of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*]. Then judgements rest

upon him. Similarly when he thinks about physical matters, he contracts his thought there. For in every place that he thinks, he draws himself there, for thought is a whole structure [in its own right].

Repentance and the Soul of Israel

'Zohar' 3:122b, Naso Reiya Mehemna

The closeness of the divine presence is here depicted as the breath of the mouth or a presence hovering over the head. This is only for the good, specifically for the People of Israel.

Repentance[1] itself is called life, 'for from it the products of life issue forth'.[2] These are the souls of Israel,[3] and the Divine Presence *[Malkhut]* is the breath that exits and enters the mouth of a person without labour or effort… Concerning this we have learnt that 'Man lives by everything that comes out of the mouth of the Lord.'[4] The Divine Presence hovers over the head of a person and verses say concerning this, 'He beheld the likeness of God', and 'Surely a man walks in the shadow [of God].'[5]

Because the Divine Presence is above the head of a man, it is forbidden for a man to go four cubits with an uncovered head. For if She, the Divine Presence, were to leave the head of a person, then life would leave him. If you say that the Divine Presence rests in a similar manner also on the heathen nations of the world, even though it was not for their sake that the heavens and the earth, and all that was generated by them, were created, in fact, she certainly does not rest upon them. For Moses requested from the Holy One, blessed be He, that the Divine Presence should not rest upon the heathen nations of the world, and this was granted him.[6]

If so, from where does the breath emerge that is found on the heathen nations of the world or on the wicked that are the mixed multitude intermixed with Israel? Well, certainly no two faces are equal. Even among Israel no two individuals are equal, how much more so among others.… Just as there is a good structure [spiritual form] that is over the head of a righteous person and guides him in all the good deeds which he performs, so that he shall merit the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], so there is an evil structure [demonic

form] over the heads of the wicked that guides them in the evil deeds they do, which leads them down to Purgatory [*Gehinnom*]. In a similar way there are different kinds of breath.

There is a good breath about which we have learnt, 'Man lives by everything that comes out of the mouth of the Lord', and there is an evil breath concerning which we have learnt, 'This also is mere breath and an evil spirit.'[1]… Thus there are different kinds of breath among people, each one according to his type.

Souls in Heaven and Earth

'Zohar' 1:60a, Noach Tosefta

Man has a dual nature, living at the same time on earth and in heaven.

Why does Scripture say 'Noah, Noah'[2] twice? The reason is that every righteous person [*tzaddik*] in the world has two spirits. One spirit in this world and one in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*]. This is found with all righteous people. 'Moses, Moses', 'Jacob, Jacob', 'Abraham, Abraham', 'Samuel, Samuel', etc.[3] The only exception is for the Patriarch Isaac, about whom the language used of the others is not used, because the soul that was in Isaac in this world left him at the time that he was offered up on the altar.[4] When Abraham was told that God revives the dead, Isaac's soul returned to him from the World to Come. Because of this we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not specifically attach his name [to a living person] except to Isaac,[5] because he was considered like a dead person.

Universal Soul and Its Heavenly Source

'Shaarei Kedushah' 3:5

The human soul is rooted in the divine and descends from there to life on earth. In a pure condition it is able to activate its connection with heaven, as in prophecy.

There is one light, in the form of a man, that spreads throughout the Four Worlds of Emanation *[Atzilut],* Creation *[Beriah],*

Formation *[Yetzirah]* and Action *[Asiyah]* to the end point of the four elements[1] of this mundane world. It is attached to the lights of the Heavenly Man, who is called 'the Ten *Sefirot*'. They [the *Sefirot]* clothe themselves in this light, which is called 'the light of the hewing out of the souls', and all the lower souls are included there. When they [these souls] descend to this world - to clothe themselves in bodies - they leave their roots attached to their source from which they were hewn. It is the branches of these roots alone that spread down level after level, and clothe themselves in bodies in this world. This is like the branches of a tree, which are attached to, and rooted in, the very trunk of the tree. They bend down low and touch the ground itself while still attached to the trunk of the tree.… This is the mystical meaning of the verse: 'For man is like the tree of the field.'[2]

This is also the mystical meaning of why sometimes the names of the righteous are doubled. Thus in Scripture we have: 'Abraham, Abraham'; 'Jacob, Jacob'; 'Moses, Moses', etc. One name refers to the root [of their soul] that remains above attached to the tree, and this is called the Heavenly Destiny *[Mazal]* of a person.…

For from it the [divine] flow issues forth to the branch that has descended and clothed itself in a body. Behold this root is very elevated, existing at the top of the World of Emanation, while its branch is very long and spreads through all the worlds until its end clothes itself in a body. In each level of each world it leaves one root there. So that there is no soul that does not have an infinite number of roots, one higher than the other.…

Through this the subject of prophecy can be explained. For since a person is refined in his physical nature, without the contamination of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*],… and without having a sin which blemishes any root of the roots of his soul, behold when he prepares himself to cleave to the upper root of his soul, then he would be able to do it.

SPEECH

Truth and Falsehood

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 66:3

The following is an analysis of the falsehoods in worship of God which are produced by the social dimension of prayer-life.

The essential part of truth is when a person does not need other people. For when a person needs other people, his face changes into many different colours.[1] Thus a person who is in need of other people finds it very hard to pray in public, and it is good and pleasant for him to pray on his own. In public he is beset by great diversions and lies, so that he makes movements and is false in his prayers because of other people, since he needs them.

Even those who do not need people for financial support, since they support themselves financially, nevertheless, they need people because of honour, or for some other reason. That is they desire honour and being important, and similar things.… Thus when someone needs people… he can fall into a great dishonesty in his prayers, making false movements because of other people.

There are people who are partly kosher, who fear God to some extent and who are ashamed to behave in such a despicable false way in prayer because of other people.

They intend to pray in a truthful manner but they feel that truth is far too much for them. This feeling itself is not correct, for there is no such thing as too much truth. For truth is one… That is since they are ashamed in their own eyes to pray in an absolutely lying manner, they want, therefore, to cover over the lie and dress the lie with truth. That is, for example, they want to make a movement or to clap their hands… but they are ashamed to perform a false act in their prayer simply for other people. Therefore, they fool themselves, and the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] goes round in their minds until it emerges in their thought that they truly need to make such a movement in their prayers, or to clap their hands. That is they find a truth for themselves which enables them to perform the action truthfully. Thus they cover the lie with truth, and we find that they have an excess of truth.

For in essence truth is only one, that is to pray in absolute veracity to God alone, may He be blessed. This lying truth, however, is very common, for it has many forms, and there are many types of truth which a person finds for himself to cover over falsehood. That is why when a person needs other people, all kinds

of excuses and lies fall upon him, and his face then changes into many colours.

Truth and Words

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:112

In the battle between good and evil, where the forces of evil may actually prevent the service of God, the way through is by means of truth.

Behold it is known that 'the evil ones go round about',[1] since the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*] surrounds holiness. For God made the two worlds parallel to each other. This is especially true of someone who has already been drawn after sins, heaven forbid. He is drawn after the Other Side, and his place is there. His sins surround him on all sides. When his spirit awakens to return to God, it is very difficult for him to pray and to speak words before God, for his sins surround him on all sides, each one according to its subject. It is impossible for him to bring out words before God in fear and trembling and with liveliness, as is fitting.

Therefore, all the words and prayers which he speaks are not able to break through the separating screens and barriers, and to rise heavenwards. They remain below under the barriers, till he attains merit and repents in truth. He then speaks words in fear and trembling, from the depths of his heart, with great inspiration, which are fitting to be received. Then this shining speech splits the separating screens and barriers, and takes up with it all the words which remained below until now.

How can one merit this? The main thing that everything depends on is truth, to walk in the way of truth according to his level. For the seal of God is truth.[1] This is the foundation of everything, for truth is the beginning, the middle and the end. Since this person is at a level of truth then, as it were, the light of God, whose seal is truth, wraps itself round him. Then it is said about him, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation.'[2] Since God is a light to him he is able to find many doors to exit from the darkness, and the exile, in which he is enclosed.

The Scarcity of Truth

‘Degel Machaneh Ephraim’, Behar, by Moses Chaim of Sudlikov

Chasidic mystics encouraged humility as the path to truth and were self-critical about false piety.

‘Truth will spring forth from the earth.’[3] One can understand this as follows: Truth has been cast down to the ground,[4] which is the very lowest level… Therefore anyone who wishes to draw near to truth must humble himself to the dust, to raise it up from there. Once one attaches oneself to this quality [of humility] one can ascend to higher and higher levels [of spirituality].

Israel and Speech

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 1:78

The creative power of words is here associated with the divine immanence of God in a feminine aspect, the Shekhinah*, with Her exile and with the mission of Israel to spread the knowledge of God in the world.*

The beginning of the Creation was in order that the quality of God’s kingship *[Malkhut]* could be revealed. Because of the greatness of God’s light it was impossible for it to be received. So He had to contract Himself *[tzimtzum]* inside all worlds. This is what Scripture says: ‘Your kingdom is the kingdom of all the worlds.’[1] That means the quality of kingship has clothed itself inside the worlds so that we should be able to receive it.

Since there is no one who is able to receive the yoke of His kingship, therefore, the souls of Israel emerge to accept the yoke of God’s kingship, for there is no king without subjects. From where do the souls of Israel emerge? From the world of speech. Speech is an aspect of kingship as the prophet Elijah says: ‘Kingship is the mouth, which is called “the Oral Torah”.’[2]

It is also an aspect of the Divine Presence *[Shekhinah],* for She dwells among people continually without a break for a moment. As it is written, ‘Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity.’[3] This is a reflection of the image of ‘a mother of children’, for it is just like a mother accompanying her children continually and not forgetting about them. So it is with speech which is an aspect of the

Divine Presence that accompanies man continually… This is also a reflection of the exile of the Divine Presence, for speech, an aspect of the Divine Presence, is in exile and has become dumb and silent, … for when speech is in exile it is dumb.

Speech Is the Soul of Man

'Arvei Nachal', Vayishlach, by David Solomon Eibeshutz

Speech is a power that affects the speaker. This belongs to an ancient tradition within Judaism that talking about bad things actually affects the world because it gives them a partial reality. But holy talk draws down holiness.

The Besht wrote that the inner spirit of man and his life force is the power of speech which is within him. As it says in Scripture, 'He [God] blew into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.'[1] The Aramaic translation translates the words 'a living soul' as 'a speaking spirit'.[2] According to this when a man speaks words, then these words are his life force, and his life force emerges with these words. Since the life force of a person always cleaves to its source, therefore, these words themselves draw a new life force from their source. Through this a person lives continuously, even though with each word his life force emerges from within, yet each word itself brings him new life force.

Behold the soul of man is a mixture of good and evil, in order that he should have free will. He is attached on one side to a good root and on the other side to its opposite. When a man speaks good and holy words, then these words awaken the good source and draw a new life force from there. So we find that the new life force comes from holiness. This is not true if a person speaks bad words. These words depart to the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*] and from there they draw upon him a new life force. That life force, which is in his midst, influences him to do evil, heaven forbid. So we find that all of the issues affecting man, whether virtuous or not, depend on his words, whether they are good or evil. For according to the aspect of speech which a person speaks now, so is the condition of the soul and the life force that he has. It is this that Scripture lets us know: a person should not think in his mind that, although he has to keep himself back from sinful deeds that the Torah has forbidden, why

should he need to guard himself from ugly words?… For every speech brings to the speaker a new life force; if the speech is evil, therefore, even if at the time of speaking he does not intends to do the thing at all, nevertheless, that speech will draw a life force to him from its place, and this life force will influence him to do it.

ANGER AND COMPASSION

The Sin of Anger

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 11

Moral qualities were very important for Kabbalists, since some negative features can totally undermine all spiritual growth, as in the following.

All other individual sins only impair a single organ of the body, but anger affects all of the soul, and weakens it completely. The matter is as follows: When a man gives way to anger his holy soul leaves him completely, and in its place a vital soul [*nefesh*] from the side of the Shell [*Kelippah*] enters into him.… Although a person may have rectified his soul, repented thoroughly for all his sins and performed many great commandments [*mitzvot*], these would all be lost to him completely.

The reason is that the holy soul that did all these good deeds has been exchanged for an unclean one and has gone away. An impure slave-girl remains in its place and she has inherited what belonged to her mistress. So he has to do this good work all over again and perform all the rectifications that he did initially. This is true every single time that he gets angry. Thus we find that an angry person has no remedy at all, for he is always like a dog returning to its vomit.

It also causes great damage in another area. That would happen if he performs some great good deed through which a holy soul of a righteous man [*tzaddik*] might impregnate him to help him develop, according to the mystery of the idea of impregnation [*ibbur*]. Through his anger, however, it [the holy soul] too removes itself [from him].… So it is impossible for a person who gives way to anger, as long as he is subject to this bad quality, to achieve

anything spiritual, even if he is a righteous person in all the other things he does. The reason is because, though he erects a spiritual edifice, he undermines all that he has built at the times when he is angry.

Compassion for the Suffering of Others

'Nefesh Hachaim', Introduction, by Isaac of Volozhin

The author is writing about the saintly behaviour of his father.

In all his ways he used to minimize his own honour in order to maximize the honour of heaven. This was particularly true of community matters, where it was known that he cast aside his own concerns[1] and was greatly involved, more than his strength could really bear. Even when he was an elderly man his hands remained faithful until the sun set.[2] As strength failed him, may the Merciful One save us, and he was actually on his sickbed, his thoughts soared upwards, and his eyes were lifted up towards heaven to associate the name of heaven with the sufferings of the community and of individuals. He did this with sighs and laments, and with broken loins,[3] so that his many sighs would shatter the body of those who heard them. He used to reprimand me when he saw that I did not empathize with the sufferings of other people. He continually remarked to me that the essence of a human being was that he was not created for himself but to assist other people in all that he was able to do.

CHAPTER 8
RITUALS

ALTAR

Altar Fire

‘Zohar’ 3:27a–b, Tzav

For the Kabbalists the rituals and liturgy of Judaism, including the sacrificial ritual of the Bible, are components in the harmonious running of the world, and in the battle with, and control of, the powers of evil. Here ritual is exemplified in the function of the altar fire.

When a person comes to sin before his Master, he burns himself with the flame of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*]. The Evil Inclination comes from the side of the spirit of impurity [*Sitra Achra*], and so the spirit of impurity rests on him. It is known that sometimes sacrifices come from that side of impurity, and they and their like need to be offered up on the altar. This spirit of impurity will not be destroyed or nullified either from man or from the side from which it comes, except through the fire of the altar. For this fire burns the spirit of impurity and evil characteristics from the world. The role of the priest in this is intended to prepare the fire so that it burns evil characteristics from the world. Therefore, it is necessary that it should never be put out, and its force and power should not be weakened, in order to break the power of this alien, evil, force from the world. For that reason… the priest has to arrange the fire on it each morning at a time when his own side of purity is dominant and stirring in the world, in order to make the world into a fragrant place and to overcome judgements so that they should not stir in the world. That is why we have learnt, ‘There is a fire that consumes fire.’[1] The heavenly fire consumes the alien fire; the fire on the altar consumes the alien fire.

AMEN

Amen and *Gehinnom*

'Zohar' 3:285b-286a, Vayelech

The simplest part of the Jewish liturgy is the 'Amen' response to blessings. Yet for the Kabbalists it is precisely in the merest detail that true holiness – or its opposite – may reside.

We have learnt that he who descends to… the nether region *[Sheol],* will never ascend again. He is called a person who has been destroyed and removed from all worlds.

We have also learnt that it is to this place that those people who refuse to answer 'Amen' are brought down. They are judged in Purgatory *[Gehinnom]* for all the many 'Amens' that are lost because they did not pay attention to them. They are taken down to the very low level which has no exit door, and from which they can never ascend. That is why it is written:

> As the cloud is consumed and has vanished away, so he who goes down into the nether region shall never ascend again.[2]

Is this indeed true? Is it not written… 'He takes down to the nether region and brings up.'[3]

The solution to this is that one case simply refers to the nether region and the other to the lowest level of the nether region. We have also learnt that one case refers to someone who has repented and the other to someone who has not repented.… If a person sanctifies the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, by reciting 'Amen' with the correct intention, he ascends level after level. He attains spiritual pleasure in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], which continuously spreads forth without interruption.

BLESSINGS

Blessings and Divine Flow

'Zohar' 3:271a, Ekev Reiya Mehemna

Prayers, like incantations, invoke the power of the divine by their reverberations in the Sefirotic *world.*

> You shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God.[1]

This commandment is to bless the Holy One, blessed be He, for everything one eats, drinks and benefits from in this world. If a person does not recite a blessing, he is called a robber of the Holy One… The colleagues [i.e. the mystics] have explained that through the blessings that a person makes to the Holy One he draws life from the source of all life [*Binah*] to the holy name [*Malkhut*] of the Holy One and brings down upon himself the heavenly oil [*Chokhmah*].

From there the divine flow comes to the whole world.… These blessings enable a person to draw into the words of the blessings from that upper source, and to bless all levels and sources. They are filled with the divine flow to permeate all the worlds, and all are blessed together. Therefore, a person needs to focus his will and his mind on the mystery of the blessings, in order that fathers and sons all together[2] should be blessed. He who blesses the Holy One, blessed be He, will himself be blessed. It is the lower world which takes its portion of these blessings first of all, and since the name of the Holy One is blessed from there, the divine flow descends and rests first on his head.[3]

Male and Female Blessings

'Zohar' 1:165a, Vayetze

Just as the divine is structured out of male and female Sefirot*, so is the lower world of man out of male and female. Only in the harmonious combination of the sexes can divine influence be brought to bear.*

We have been taught that Adam and Eve were created as one couple joined together. Since they were one united couple, it says

immediately that God blessed them. For no blessing can rest on a place unless there is a male and a female there. That is illustrated by the story of Jacob who, when he set out for Haran, was single, having not yet married. It is written that 'he entreated God',[1] but God only answered him in a dream. When he was married, and was coming home with all of his children,[2] heavenly hosts of angels, as it were, entreated him and pleaded with him, as it is written, 'And the angels of the Lord entreated him.'[3]… Before he had seen angels in a dream of the night; now he saw them with his eyes, awake and in daylight.[4]

CHARITY

Charity Is Itself a Gift

'Zohar' 2:198a, Vayakhel

Moral qualities, such as compassion for the poor, are interpreted in religious terms by Kabbalists for whom all details of the world and of man's activity are aspects of the holy.

Happy is the portion of that man to whom a poor person comes. For that poor person is a gift from the Holy One, blessed be He, which He has sent. Happy is the portion of the person who receives this present[1] with a pleasant countenance.

Come and see. If a person has compassion on a poor person and revives his soul, then the Holy One considers this as if he had indeed created his soul.[2] For this reason Abraham, who had compassion on everyone, was considered by the Holy One as if he had created them, as it says in Scripture: 'And the souls which they [Abraham and Sarah] made in Haran'.[3]…

One should spread out a tablecloth with bread and food to eat.… And one needs to cut up the bread in pieces before the poor person so that he should not be ashamed, and one should cut them up with a generous eye.

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision of Isaac Luria

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 23

The connection of Jewish mystics to the prophet Elijah is testified to on many occasions, since they believed mystical revelation often came from him. His connection to some of the greatest Kabbalists is found in the stories of their early life.

When Isaac Luria was born, the prophet Elijah, may his memory be for a blessing, appeared to his father who was a very pious man and to his mother who also was pious, and said to his father: 'Be very careful on the day of the circumcision of this child. Do not circumcise him until you see me stand next to you in the synagogue.'

When the eighth day arrived they took the child to the synagogue for the circumcision. His father looked around in all directions to see if Elijah was there. He could not see him so he delayed the circumcision for more than half an hour. All the congregation stood and wondered why there was such a delay, till the time came that they began to rebuke him. His father took no notice of their protests, and continued to wait. Meanwhile Elijah appeared and told the father to sit down on the chair, so he sat down with the child on his lap. Elijah then sat down on the father's lap and took the child from the father's hand and put it on his own lap and held it with both his hands. The man performing the ritual *[mohel]* circumcised the child but he could see nothing except the child's father.[1] When the circumcision was over Elijah gave the child back to his father, and said: 'Take the child and hold on to him for a great light will emerge from him.'

Circumcision, Holy Covenant and Sexual Sins

'Zohar' 2:3 a, Shemot

Sexual sins are thought of by Kabbalists as great obstacles in maintaining holiness in the world and as driving away the Divine Presence.

There are three types of men who drive away the Divine Presence

[Shekhinah] from this world, and cause the Holy One, blessed be He, not to dwell in the world. When this happens people cry out in prayer but no one listens to their voice.

There is the man who has sexual relations with a menstrual woman. For there is nothing as strongly defiling as the impurity of a menstrual woman. The impurity of a menstrual woman is the hardest of all impurities in the world. Such a man makes himself impure, and all those who are near him become impure with him. Every place he goes he drives away the Divine Presence from before him. Not only that but he causes severe sickness to come upon him and upon his children. Once a man has had sexual relations[2] with a menstrual woman, the impurity springs upon him and remains in all his limbs. Any child that is born to him at that time will draw upon itself the spirit of impurity, and will be in a state of impurity all of its life. The reason is that the building and foundation are based on an impurity, that is the greatest and the strongest of all impurities of the world. For immediately a man draws near to a menstrual woman the impurity springs upon him.…

Then there is the person who has sexual relations with a heathen woman,[1] who brings the holy sign of Covenant[2] into an alien domain… We have learnt that there is no zealotry before the Holy One like the zealotry for the Covenant, for it is the support for the holy name of God and for the mystery of faith.… The leaders of the people, who know that people are engaged in this activity but do not protest against them, will be punished first.… Rabbi Abba said that… we have learnt that in the verse, 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield'.[3] The sun and the shield refer to the holy Covenant. Just as the sun shines on, and illuminates, the world so the holy Covenant shines on, and illuminates, the body of a man. Just as a shield protects a man, so the holy Covenant protects a man. No harm in the world is able to approach the man who guards it [the Covenant].… The leaders of the community are entrapped by this sin in each generation, if they know about it but are not zealous [in eradicating it], since they have a duty to be zealous for the Holy One, concerning this Covenant against all those who bring its holiness into an alien domain. Concerning such a person it is written:

> You shall have no other gods before my face.… You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a zealous god.[4]

All this zealotry is one and the same.[5] Therefore, the Divine Presence is driven away from before him. A person who counterfeits the holy Covenant, which is sealed in the flesh of humans, it is as if he had counterfeited the name of the Holy One, blessed be He. One who counterfeits the seal of the King, it as if he had counterfeited the King Himself. He thus has no portion in the God of Israel, without the power of continuous repentance.…

Then there is the one who kills his own children, that is the embryo with which his wife is pregnant, which he causes to be killed in the womb.[1] For he is undermining the building and handiwork of the Holy One. There are people who murder people, and this person murders his children. He performs three evils which the whole world cannot bear, and the world gradually crumbles, little by little, without people knowing. The Holy One departs from the world and the sword, famine and death come upon the world. These three evils are: a) killing one's children, b) undermining the building of the King and c) driving away the Divine Presence which goes to and fro in the world and does not find rest. The Holy Spirit weeps for these three evils, and the world is judged with different kinds of judgements.[2] Woe unto that man, woe unto him. It would have been better for him had he not been created in the world.

Happy are Israel for even while they were in exile in Egypt they were safeguarded against these three sins: the menstrual woman, the heathen woman and killing one's seed. They engaged publicly in being 'fruitful and multiplying'.[3]

Even though there had been a decree that 'Every male child that is born shall be cast into the Nile',[4] one does not find among them a man who killed an embryo in his wife's womb. How much more so [did they not perform abortions] after that [decree was over]. In the merit of this Israel came out of exile.

DANCE

Dance and Ecstasy

'Mishnah', Sukkah 5

Dance was known in the Bible and in Rabbinic literature as a form of

religious ecstasy. Here is an account of Temple practice, which had ceased with the destruction of the Temple towards the end of the first century.

It has been said that anyone who never saw the rejoicing at the Water Drawing Ceremony[1] had never seen true joy in their life. At the end of the first day of the festival, they[2] came down to the women's courtyard and re-arranged the situation.[3] There were golden candlesticks with four golden bowls at their tops… and there was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light of the Water Drawing Ceremony. Pious men and mystics[4] used to dance before them[5] with torches of fire in their hands, chanting songs and praises. The Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and many other musical instruments.

Dance Removes Harsh Judgements

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:10:1

Among Chasidic mystics dance was not only an expression of religious ecstasy, but also affected the world.

When there is, heaven forbid, harsh judgement against Israel, the judgement may be sweetened by dancing and by clapping the hands.

Dancing with the Jews of Russia

'Mishnat Chabad' 2, Beer Hachasidut: Sippurim Ketanim, p. 158, by A. Steinman

The ecstatic experience of dance here is seen to transcend space in this story from early twentieth-century Russia. Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak lived 1880–-1950.

On the festival of the Rejoicing of the Law [*Simchat Torah*][1] in the Jewish year 5689,[2] Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak, the head of the Lubavitch Chasidic Movement, sat at 'table' [*tisch*][3] with a congregation of his followers in the Latvian city of Riga, and expounded Chasidic

teachings. This was just after he was released from prison in Russia. In his talk he mentioned, with bitterness, his pain and concern for the Jews of Russia who were in great trouble. Suddenly he livened up and said:

> The distinction of levels and borders only exists within the divine light that immanently fills all worlds, but no divisions apply to the divine light which surrounds all worlds transcendently.[4] Therefore, we are together, together, together with the Jews of Russia: come let us dance a dance together with the Jews of Russia.

That festival of the Rejoicing of the Law they danced a great deal.

Dances of Religious Joy

'Likkutei Etzot', Erech Simchah, no. 12, by Nathan of Nemirov

It is precisely the non-intellectual nature of dance, the joy of the feet, that enables it to overcome evil which attacks the lowest extremities of the body. At the same time it is subject to the Evil Inclination if undertaken for the wrong reasons.

Dances of a religious nature [*mitzvah*] occur, for instance, when one drinks wine on the Sabbath, or at festivals, or at a religious wedding, or at other religious feasts. When one drinks in moderation, and one's intention is directed to heaven to give merit to the joy of Israel and to rejoice in God, may He be blessed, who has chosen us from all peoples, then one may arouse [religious] joy through this. This may continue until joy is drawn down into the feet, that is that one dances because of the joy. Through this one drives away the external forces [*Kelippot*] which attach themselves to the feet, and one soothes[1] and nullifies all the harsh judgements. One merits receiving all blessings. This burning enthusiasm involved in dancing is a fire which is 'a sweet savour to the Lord'.[2] One who dances, however, with the burning enthusiasm of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] is like one offering up strange fire [to God].[3] The wine which he has drunk is like the wine of drunkenness, where there is an attachment of external forces, heaven forbid. We thus find that dances and holiness can soothe harsh judgements.

THE FOCUS ON GOD

Setting God Always before One

‘Shivchei Moharan’ 2

One of the central concepts of the religious life of the Kabbalist is attachment to God, devekut. *This was particularly important for Chasidic mystics, even more than learning itself.*

When Rebbe Nachman of Breslav was a young boy, sitting in front of his own teacher, he wanted to fulfil the verse, ‘I have set the Lord always before me.’[1] He made great efforts to picture the four-letter name[2] of God, may He be blessed, before his eyes. Because his thoughts were occupied with this he did not know what he was learning, and his teacher was angry with him. Nevertheless, all the days of his youth (despite focusing on the divine name) he was able to engage in very childish behaviour, playing games, jumping and strolling around on a regular basis.

Renewing One’s Service to God

‘Shivchei Moharan’ 6

The idea of renewing one’s service to God plays an important part in certain schools of mysticism, particularly in the Breslav school.

Rebbe Nachman [of Breslav] continually used to begin his service to God each time anew. When he occasionally fell from his current spiritual level, he did not despair because of this. Rather he said he would start anew, as if he had not yet begun at all to enter God’s service, may He be blessed, only now he was starting anew. Thus it was continually, each time he used to begin anew. He could have several new beginnings in the same day, for even in the same day he would sometimes fall from his service to God and he would begin afresh several times over in one day.

FOOD

Food and Beauty

‘Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav’, p. 63

Care for cleanliness and beauty was promoted by Jewish mystics who were aware of the Presence of God in this lowly world.

It is beautiful to eat when one sits down at a table with clean clothes and with a clean tablecloth spread out on the table. Not like those who sit and eat, make a blessing over bread or food with dirty clothes, and the tablecloth on the table is torn, worn out, shabby, black as a raven and dirty. The bread and the food are spread out in a disorderly manner on the table. Such a person draws upon himself the side of impurity *[Sitra Achra]*. For the side of holiness only rests on a clean place, as Scripture says: ‘Your camp shall be holy.’[1] This is also written in the Zohar that the first of the ten things that one must do before a meal is to prepare the table because of the honour of the King who has provided the food.[2]

Food and Trapped Souls

‘Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav’, p. 63

Eating is a holy act, but also an expression of compassion because there are trapped souls in the food that can be raised to God.

It is known to children in religious school that in everything there are holy sparks and many reincarnated souls. When a person eats and is strengthened to serve God, and afterwards serves God with the life-giving force that was in that food, there is an upward movement of those holy souls. In this respect the table is like the heavenly altar on which the angel Michael offers up the souls of Israel.[1] Similarly with the table on which a person eats he offers up the souls of Israel to the one God.

I have heard from my master, the holy Rebbe Jacob Isaac Hurwitz of Lublin,[2] his soul is in Eden, that each person should be careful not to be in the category of Jeroboam[3] the son of Nevat,

who sinned and caused many people to sin. For a person eats food in which there are a multitude of the reincarnated souls of Israel. If after eating he angers the Creator, [empowered by] the life force[4] of those holy souls, he also causes those souls which were in the food, and which attached themselves to him to elevate them, to sin. Not only has he not elevated them but he has added sin to their sins. This is like Jeroboam the son of Nevat. It is recommended about this issue that before someone goes to eat he should examine his deeds for any transgressions, in order to elevate those souls to a good place.

Eating and God

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Akhilah, from 'Kitzur Shenei Luchot Haberit', by Yechiel Michal Epstein

For the Kabbalists the most basic of human activities can be an occasion for cleaving to God.

At the time of eating a person's heart should be cleaving to God, may He be blessed, more than during the rest of the day. This principle is found in the verse: 'And they beheld the Lord, and they ate and they drank.'[5] This is to be interpreted to mean that they contemplated and saw the Divine Glory in their heart while they ate and drank.

GRACE AFTER MEALS

The Divine Presence at the Table

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Akhilah based on 'Zohar' 2:168b, Terumah, and 'Tzioni', Va-Etchanan

Food, if eaten in the right way as a holy act, leaves a residue of blessing in a person.

A person should not be a glutton or a gourmand, but should be like one who eats in the presence of the Holy One, may He be blessed, the King. This is in

order to cleave to the qualities of compassion and holiness, rather than fear and judgement. Thus a blessing will remain in his bowels.… He is able to eat to his satisfaction, and it is as if he is eating before the King.

[says the Midrash Talpiyot anthologist.]

Since the table atones for sins in place of the altar, as our Sages say,[1] therefore, the Divine Presence *[Shekhinah]* resides at the table just as it used to reside on the altar to receive the sacrifices of Israel. Consequently one needs to conjure up before one's eyes the image as if one were eating in the presence of the Divine King. In this way the Divine Presence resides there and a blessing is left in his bowels, for in the place where there is a residue of the Divine Presence blessing rests. Many times I have criticized people who eat luxurious food, sit at the table in a frivolous manner and recite the Grace After Meals without wearing a respectable hat on their heads, with their arms uncovered, and leaning to the side without sitting in an honourable manner.

HAIR

Hair and Its Symbolism

'Maggid Mesharim', Shemot

In Judaism there are a number of rituals associated with hair and hair-style for both men and women. These are of particular significance for Kabbalists since the hair represents aspects of the divine world and of the world of evil in man.

Rava explained the verse, 'Your reputation went out among the nations for your beauty',[1] as follows. The daughters of Israel did not [at that time] have any pubic hair under their armpits or on their genitals.'[2]

[The daemon is speaking:]

Now concerning this issue of the daughters of Israel lacking pubic hair under their armpits and on their genitals, my chosen one, Solomon,[3] raised the question of how it would be possible to

examine them to see if they had come of age for religious purposes.[4] Well have you answered that they could examine the hair receptacles.[5] One can also say that they examined the girls to see if their breasts had developed.[6]

The problem still remains how could the daughters of Israel be lacking something that was such a natural thing in the created world. The mystery behind this, however, is that these hairs symbolize those dimensions that surround the Divine Presence *[Knesset Yisrael],*[7] and at that time the Divine Presence was illuminated and there was no Satan, the accuser, and no evil spirit. To symbolize this they therefore had none of these hairs. So it will be in the future.

Hair Removal Prohibited

'Orchot Tzaddikim' 63, by Chaim Vital

The tradition of growing beards and side curls among Kabbalists is partly based on biblical prescription but also on the following.

It is an absolute prohibition to uproot or remove with one's hand even one hair in any place, for they are the channels of divine flow. Therefore, a person needs to be careful not to place his hand on his beard and rub it, so as not to uproot and remove any hair.

MEAT

Meat Eating

'Zohar' 1:89b, Lech Lecha

Although there are strong ascetic tendencies among the mystics, which on occasion led to self-flagellation, rolling in snow and other hard practices to break the hold of the desires of the Evil Inclination, Jewish religion in general emphasized the value of celebrating ordinary life with its ordinary legitimate pleasures. The ambiguity is apparent here, where the pleasures of meat eating are seen as a concession to man after he had sinned.

Until Adam sinned Scripture says about him:

> God said: Behold I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed. To you it shall be for food.[1]

It is written 'to you it shall be for food' and nothing more [than it]. Once Adam had sinned and the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] was absorbed into his body and into [the bodies of] all his descendants, God passed judgement over him. Afterwards Noah came and saw that his body was built up from the place of the Evil Inclination, and he offered up a sacrifice just as Adam had done. Then Scripture says:

> The Lord smelled the sweet odour, and the Lord said in his heart: I will not continue to curse the ground for man's sake, since the inclination of a man's heart is evil from his youth.[1]

The Holy One, blessed be He, said that from now on since the human body has absorbed the Evil Inclination, the body can enjoy itself as it wishes, and he may eat meat. 'Like the green herb I have given everything to you.'[2] When he eats meat, then his own flesh takes pleasure in it. The two are intermingled and his body grows through it. From that pleasure the body sins with many sins.

THE RITUAL BATH (*MIKVEH*)

Mikveh and Inner Purity

'Etz Hadaat Tov' (on Song of Songs)

Spiritual purity had its concomitant in practices of ritual purity, involving bathing in natural water sources or in a ritual bath. The motive for such purification, however, was also subject to the demands of spiritual purity.

I have heard from my teachers that even if a man goes to the ritual bath [*mikveh*] to receive holiness, he is also not allowed to have as

his intention that he should receive holiness for himself, of wanting to sanctify and purify himself. For this is also egotistical. The purpose of the ritual bath should be… that it is necessary for a person to purify himself in order to cause pleasure to his Creator, in that he is able to receive the divine energy. For it is His nature to do good.… For God will not hold back the good from those who walk in the way of perfection. That is why it is said, 'New every morning'.[1] For every single day a person has to find a new way to serve God with the commandments. Just as He, as it were [*keveyakhol*],[2] renews the work of Creation. That is why it is said, 'Each day they shall be as if they were new.'[3] The Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] laments, however, over a person who seeks only his own egotistical spiritual development.

COMMANDMENT (*MITZVAH*)

Mitzvah and God Are One

'Maggid Devarav LeYaakov (Likkutei Amarim)', section 14, p. 86

More than other acts rituals have an inner dimension that because of their holiness must reflect inner purity, or the holiness of the ritual act is spoilt.

Even if we perform a commandment [*mitzvah*], but not for the right spiritual reasons,[4] that is if one does it with ulterior motive, we find that through this one makes a separation [from God], heaven forbid. This is because 'The Torah and the Holy One are one.'[5] Thus if we perform a commandment in the correct spiritual manner, then this commandment and the Holy One are united, and everything partakes of one holiness and one spirituality.

If, however, we perform a commandment not for the right spiritual reasons, we form a shell around this commandment preventing it from uniting it with the holiness of the Holy One. This therefore creates a separation between the holiness of this commandment and the holiness of the Holy One. This separation is called a Shell [*Kelippah*],[1] for it forms a shell around the

commandment so that it is not able to unite with His holiness.

Mystical Intentions of Commandments (*Mitzvot*)

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 58

This is an explanation, from Chasidic Kabbalah, of the way in which mystical ideas are inherent in the non-mystical aspects of Judaism.

How is it possible that in a short time our father Abraham, peace be upon him, could have had all the mystical intentions which are ascribed to him, and also a number of books have been written about the deep mystical secrets of the Book of Ruth. We have already heard a report that the holy Baal Shem of Mezhiboz, may his memory be for a blessing, said that it is not possible that the meaning of the Book of Ruth should be about such deep ideas. The root of the matter, however, is that the quality of truth is such that it includes everything, the beginning, the middle and the end. If a man performs a commandment [*mitzvah*] perfectly, in truth and with his whole heart, then automatically all the mystical intentions are also fulfilled.

Mitzvah in Joy Not Sadness

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot

The battle with the powers of evil even extends to the performance of rituals and holy acts.

A person should not multiply extra details in the way he performs religious acts, because this is the strategy of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] in order to make man fearful that perhaps he is not fulfilling his duty in this matter. This is intended to bring a person to a state of despair, and despair is the greatest obstacle in the service of the Creator, may He be blessed.

Even if a person stumbles by committing a sin, he should still not increase his despair which would nullify his service [of God]. He should only be sad for the sin itself. He should then rejoice in the Creator, since he fully regrets his action and has in mind not to

return to his foolishness in any way. Even if a person knows that he has certainly not fulfilled his obligation in a particular matter, because of many obstacles, he should still not despair. He should think that the Creator, who tests the heart and the inner parts of man, knows that he wishes to do [God's will] in the best manner, but it is just that he is unable. He should strengthen himself to rejoice in the Creator…

For sometimes there is a commandment that has within it a small amount of sin, yet he should not pay attention to the Evil Inclination which wishes to nullify his performance of the commandment. He should say to the Evil Inclination that his purpose is not merely to perform this commandment, rather it is to give pleasure to the Creator, may He be blessed, through this commandment. With this the Evil Inclination will depart from him, with God's help.

PHYLACTERIES (*TEFILLIN*)

Phylacteries and the Evil Other Side

'Zohar' 2:237b, Pekudei

The reason given here for the cow hairs sticking out of the tefillin *is that in order to perform commandments man has to give a portion to the* Sitra Achra*, the evil 'Other Side'. This is to prevent the* Sitra Achra *from accusing Israel of sinning. Hair symbolizes the* Sitra Achra*, hence the head* tefillin *have also to be above the hair line.*

Rabbi Simeon said: The Holy One, blessed be He, has given control to the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*] to rule over our world, and it is necessary to subdue this spirit of impurity from all sides. Come and I will tell you one secret, which is not to be revealed except to high holy beings.… In that place where the spirit of impurity has been given control to rule over this world in a number of ways, it is able to do damage. We do not have permission to treat the Other Side lightly. We have to guard against it, so that it does not accuse us of sins in our holy activities. Therefore, there is a secret, namely that we have to give it [the Other Side] a little place in our holy

practices, since its power derives from holiness. Thus we need, in the mystery of the phylacteries [*tefillin*], to hide the hair of a calf which should jut out a little so it can be seen. For this hair does not convey impurity, unless it is of the length of an ear of barley. Less than that does not cause impurity. This hair has to be brought into our highest holiness, and to give it a place so that the Other Side does not act as an accuser against us in our holy activity. When the hair sticks out and it can be seen, then it [the Other Side] sees the man who is engaged in a lofty holy act, and it has a portion in this. Then it will not accuse him of sinning, and will not be able to do evil to him, either above or below, for a place has been given to it [the side of evil].

PRAYER

Studying Kabbalah is a special kind of holy activity and various prayers were composed as meditations before engaging in it. Some prayers from Kabbalistic texts were incorporated into the general liturgy.

Prayer by Moses Cordovero before Study of Kabbalah From

'Zohar Hatorah' 2, ascribed to Moses Cordovero

You who sit on high and whose providence directs the worlds below. God of all that has been emanated, unique one. Master of awe and true judge. Emanator of all that is emanated. Creator of all creatures. Former of all that has form. Source of all activity. Who is able to conceive of even one myriad part of the greatness of the level of the wonders of Your deeds, let alone the greatness of the forms You have formed.

Who could think of knowing one myriad part of the secrets of the mysteries hidden in Your creation, how much more so are we unable to grasp an infinitesimal part of Your emanation. Namely, that one Master, alone and unique, unites with them in complete union.

Therefore, Father of Mercy, forgive and pardon and pass over all

my sins, transgressions and iniquities that I have performed before You from the day that I was first on earth until today. For all my 248 organs and 365 sinews,[1] my vital soul [*nefesh*], spirit [*ruach*] and higher soul [*neshamah*] are like sheep without a shepherd. We have strayed and desecrated things that we cannot rectify [from *tikkun*] without the great flow of divine light which comes from the supernal heights above, to rectify the defects which we have caused.

May it be Your will, Lord my God and God of my fathers, that You purify my soul, spirit and essence that I may be fit and worthy to awaken the lower waters through the study of the holy Zohar.

Remove the covers from my eyes, so that I behold the wonders of Your Torah. Make me worthy to be illumined through the light of Your Torah, that I may understand the delight of its secret mysteries, to study, teach, keep and perform them. May the pleasantness of the Lord our God be upon us, and the work of our hands established for us. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be in accordance with Your will, my God, my Rock and my redeemer.[2]

Prayer by Isaac Luria before Study of Kabbalah From

'Sefer Hazohar', ascribed to Isaac Luria

Master of the Worlds and Lord of Lords, Father of Mercy and Forgiveness, we give thanks before You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, in complete obeisance for having brought us near to Your Torah and to Your holy service, for having given us a portion in the secrets of Your holy Torah.

What are we, and what is our life, that You should have performed for us this great act of mercy? Therefore, we cast our supplication before You, requesting that You forgive and pardon all our sins and transgressions, and that our sins should not divide us from You.

Also may it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, that You orientate our hearts to Your awe and Your love, and let Your ears hearken to these our words. Open our uncircumcised hearts to the secrets of Your Torah, and let this study be pleasing before Your Throne of Glory like the sweet fragrance of incense.

Emanate upon us the light of the source of our souls[1] in all our aspects. Let the sparks of light of Your holy servants,[2] through whom You have revealed Your words in the world, radiate forth. May their merit, the merit of their fathers, the merit of their Torah, of their perfection and of their holiness support us, so that we should not stumble in these matters.

May their merit illuminate our eyes in what we are studying. In the words of the pleasant singer of Israel: 'Open my eyes and I will perceive the wonders of Your Torah.'[3] May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be in accordance with Your will, Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.[4] For the Lord will provide wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.[5]

Prayer from the Zohar

'Zohar' 2:206a, Vayakhel

This prayer (known as Brich Shemeih*) has made its way into the Jewish prayer book and is recited when the ark is open and the Torah scrolls are being taken out.*

Rabbi Simeon said: When the Scroll of the Torah is taken out to be read before the congregation, the gates of mercy in heaven are opened and the attribute of supernal Love [within the divine] is stirred up. Each person should then recite the following:

Blessed be the name of the Master of the universe, blessed be Your crown [*Keter*] and Your place [*Shekhinah*], may Your favour accompany Your people Israel for evermore, and may You manifest to Your people the redemption of Your right hand[1] in Your Sanctuary, so as to make us enjoy Your goodly light and to accept our prayers in mercy. May it be Your will to prolong our life in goodness, and may I, Your servant, be counted among the righteous. So that You have mercy upon me, guard me and all that is mine and all that are of Your people Israel. You are He that nourishes and sustains all, You are ruler over all, You are ruler over all kings, and the kingdom is Yours.

I am a servant of the Holy One, blessed be He, who bows down before Him and before His glorious Torah at all times. Not in man do I put my trust, nor do I rely upon the sons of angels,[2] but on the

God of heaven, who is the God of truth and whose Torah is truth, whose prophets are true prophets,[3] and who performs great acts of goodness and truth. In Him do I put my trust and unto His holy and glorious name do I sing praises. May it be Your will to open my heart to Your Torah, and grant me male children who will do Your will. May You fulfil the desires of my heart, and those of Your people Israel, for whatever is good, for life and for peace. Amen.

Zohar Prayer for Sabbath Eve

'Zohar' 2:135a

This passage about the unification of the male and female aspects of the divine, is recited as a prayer (known as Ke-gavna*) in some synagogues on the Sabbath eve, to welcome the onset of the Sabbath.*

Just as they[1] are united above in Unity, so She [*Shekhinah*] is united below in the Mystery of Unity, to be with them above with unity opposite unity.[2] The Holy One, blessed be He, who is One above, does not sit on His Throne of Glory,[3] until She has entered into the mystery of Unity in accordance with His essence, to be One in Oneness. This, as we explain, is the mystical meaning of the words: 'The Lord is One, and His Name is One.'[4]

The mystery of the Sabbath is that the Sabbath is united with the mystery of the One, so that the mystery of Oneness rests upon it, as expressed in the prayer for the eve of the Sabbath. The holy Throne of Glory[5] is unified through the mystery of Oneness, and is prepared as a seat for the Holy Heavenly King. When the Sabbath arrives, She is in perfect union and is separated from the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*], and all the forces of judgement are removed from Her.[6] She remains in close union with the Holy Light and is crowned with many crowns for the Holy King. All the ruling Powers of Fury and the Masters of Judgement, each and every one, flee from Her, and no other authority reigns in any of the worlds except for Her. Her face is illuminated by the heavenly light, and she is crowned here below by the Holy People,[1] all of whom are crowned with new souls.[2] Then is the beginning of prayer, when the worshippers bless Her with joy and shining faces, saying, 'Bless the Lord, the Blessed One'.

Prayer and Joy

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 1:5:1

Fulfilling the commandments, ‘mitzvot’*, is the prime way in which the Jew responds to God in the practical sphere. Performed in joy for their own sake they are a link between man and God.*

Every person has to say: ‘The whole world was only created for my sake.’[3] We find that since the world was created ‘for my sake’, I need to look into and investigate the rectification [*tikkun*] of the world at all times, to fill the breaches in the world, and to pray for them.… When one performs divine commandments with great joy, then one does not want any reward in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*], but wishes for the Holy One, blessed be He, to provide another commandment as a reward for the commandment already performed. As our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, say: ‘The reward of a commandment is itself a commandment.’[4] For he [the person] benefits from the commandment itself.…

The commandments themselves are a complete structure, and they give life to all structures, whether it is human structures or structures of the world, or of time.[5] For space, time and soul all receive their life force from the commandments.… The Holy One is completely united with the commandments, and when the handiwork of the Holy One is correct and well ordered, then the Holy One rejoices in it and takes pleasure from it, as Scripture says, ‘God rejoices in His handiwork.’[6]

Just as a craftsman having made a beautiful vessel takes pleasure in it, so the joy of the Holy One is clothed in the commandments, for they are united with Him. Thus a person who performs a commandment in the very joy of the commandment itself finds that he has entered into the joy of the Holy One, who rejoices in His handiwork.

Prayer and Mysticism

‘Likkutei Moharan’ 2:120

Prayer was the main way of communicating with God, but for the

Kabbalists it could take many forms, some of which were more like meditation than communication. Such depersonalized prayers were not always approved of by the Chasidic mystics.

One of our fellow disciples told me that he was speaking to our Rebbe [Nachman of Breslav], may his memory be for a blessing, about the service of God, as he often did. Our Rebbe, who understood that he [the disciple] was involved with the mystical intentions in his prayers, objected very strongly and told him not to get involved with this any more, and not to pray with mystical intentions. He should only have in mind the meaning of the words in a simple manner. Although this man actually studied the [mystical] writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing, through Rebbe Nachman's instruction, nevertheless, he did not want him to pray with these mystical intentions at all.

Our Rebbe said to him that, to a person who is not suitable for this, when he prays with these mystical intentions, then it is like magic. For with magic it is said that 'One must not learn about it to practise it.'[1] Our Rabbis remark: 'You must not learn to practise it, but you may learn to understand and to teach.'[2] Thus it is with the subject of the mystical intentions,… the only reason for learning about them is to understand and to teach them but not to perform them, that is to have these mystical intentions in prayer, if one is not worthy of it.

Rebbe Nachman said: The essential part of prayer is attachment [*devekut*] to God, may He be blessed, and it would be better to pray using the vernacular that one speaks. For when one prays in the language one speaks, then one's heart is bound up with, and very attached to, the words of the prayer, and one is able to attach oneself more to God. The Men of the Great Assembly,[1] however, have already fixed the prayer liturgy [because not every person is capable of arranging his own personal prayers]. Therefore, we have a duty to pray in the holy tongue,[2] as they have ordered it for us. The main thing is to focus on the simple meaning of the words, for this is the essence of prayer that we pray before God, for every single thing. Through this one draws near and attaches oneself to Him.… With those *Tzaddikim* who are at a true and great level, all the mystical intentions of the Ari are indeed the meaning of the words. For in the meaning of the words, for them all the mystical intentions are included.

Prayer and Meditation

‘Keter Shem Tov’, section 387, vol. 2, p. 111

Some Chasidic mystics did favour the meditation aspect of mystical prayer above its more personalized aspects.

In prayer one needs to put all one’s energy into the words, and move in this manner from letter to letter, until one forgets about the physical world. One should think that the letters join together and connect to one another. This is a great joy, for if one can take pleasure in physical matters, how much more so in spiritual ones. This is the world of Formation. After that one comes to the letters in thought, where one does not hear what is said. In this one comes to the world of Creation. After that one comes to the quality of Nothingness [*ayin*],[1] where all a person’s physical powers are nullified. This is the world of Emanation, the aspect of Wisdom.

CHAPTER 9
SACRED SPACE AND SACRED TIME

SACRED SPACE

The Earth Is Round

'Zohar' 3:10a, Vayikra

This is a view of world geography with which the Medieval Kabbalists worked, and which they ascribed to ancient texts.

In the Book of Rab Hamnuna the Elder, it is explained at great length that the whole of the inhabited world revolves in a circle like a ball, so that some are above and some below, and creatures are different in their appearances due to the nature of the air in the different locations, but they live as long as other men. Because of this there are places within the inhabited world where it is light, while in another part it is dark; for some it is night whereas for others it is day. There are also places where it is always day and where there it is never night, except for a very short period. This is what is actually said in the books of the ancient ones and in the Book of Adam, the first man.… This secret was entrusted to the Kabbalistic masters of wisdom but is not known to those who simply mark out geographical borders, for it is a great secret of the Torah.… It is only humans who have control over all these worlds, and above them is the Holy One, blessed be He.

Jerusalem Is the Heart of the World

'Degel Machaneh Ephraim', Va-Etchanan

Outer and inner space are parallel worlds for the mystics, as in this reflection on the value of the pure heart of man.

I have heard from my master and grandfather [the Besht],… It is the way of all the organs [of the body] to act according to the heart, and in it [the heart] is the life force which moves the whole body… for it is the life of all the organs. Behold… the heart is called Jerusalem, for it is in the middle of the body just as Jerusalem is in the middle of the world.… The heart was created to be a dwelling for the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, 'Let them make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them.'[1]

Literally 'among them'.

Great merit accrues to the person who makes a beautiful dwelling place in his heart. We find that the heart was created to be a dwelling place for the Holy One, and the Holy One only dwells in a heart which is broken and humble. Therefore, the perfection of the heart is to be broken inwardly, and then, when it has perfected itself, it is referred to as Jerusalem, and called the holy city with its King within it.

The Third Heavenly Temple

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 8, p. 24a

The forces of evil, led by Samael and his consort Lilith, 'the Serpent', were responsible for the devastation involved in the destruction of the two Jerusalem Temples, but in the Messianic age they will be overcome because God Himself will build the Third Temple.

Scripture says:

> The moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of Hosts will reign in Zion and Jerusalem.[2]

Neither Samael nor his cohorts are in awe of God, and they have destroyed the First and Second Temples. Because of this, 'The moon will be confounded', which refers to the Serpent, the harlot wife, 'and the sun ashamed', which refers to Purgatory *[Gehinnom]*. For the Serpent, the harlot wife, destroyed the house of the Divine

Presence *[Shekhinah]* and the sun, which is Purgatory, a deadly poison, burnt the Temple. At the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, will rebuild them [the Temples] as they were originally, as it is written, 'The Lord builds Jerusalem',[1] then 'The moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed.' When will this be? At the time that the Lord of Hosts will reign. The building of the first two Temples was done by the hands of man, and because of this they [Samael and Lilith] were able to take control of them.… Since the building of the last Temple will be undertaken by the Holy One Himself, it will be established [and not destroyed].

Temple and Synagogue Below and Above

'Zohar' 2:59b, Beshalach Reiya Mehemna

Heavenly structures are a model for sacred space on earth. Here the heavenly model is applied both to the biblical Tabernacle and temples of old and to the synagogue.

It is commanded to build an earthly sanctuary below, corresponding to the heavenly sanctuary above. As the verse says, 'A place for You to dwell which You, O Lord, have made.'[2] Thus it is necessary to build a temple below, and to recite prayers in it each day, to worship the Holy One, blessed be He, for prayer is called the service [of God]. That synagogue needs to be built with great beauty, and with all necessary features. For the synagogue below exists as a parallel to the synagogue above. The Temple below also exists in parallel to the Temple above, in detailed and exact relationship one to another. That Temple, all its features, all its forms of worship, all its vessels and all its attendants, are a parallel to those above. The Tabernacle [*Mishkan*] which Moses made in the wilderness was modelled entirely on the heavenly exemplar. The Temple which King Solomon built was a house of tranquillity like the heavenly model with all its fixtures, so that it became, through the heavenly arrangement a house of tranquillity and pros-perity.[1] Thus a synagogue also, in all its beautiful features, must reflect the heavenly arrangement. It should be a house of prayer to effect the rectifications made by prayer in a proper way. That [little] temple must have windows, as Scripture says, 'His windows were open',[2] just as they exist above.… One might say that surely [one can pray]

even in a field because the spirit can soar there. That is not correct, however, because we need a house and there is none. The existence of a house below, parallel to the house above, is to bring down the One who dwells above [*Shekhinah*] to those who dwell below [humans].

SACRED TIME: FASTING AND FESTIVALS

The Correct Mindset for Fasting

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot

Attitudes to ascetic practices among the Kabbalists differed, but in general they were advocated as a means of overcoming this-worldly desires. Chasidic mystics were more ambiguous, because asceticism denied the joy of service to God. The following is a meditation on fasting, one of the more acceptable ascetic practices, from the founder of Chasidic mysticism.

A person should have the following in mind when fasting: Woe is me, because of my desires and my arrogant honour I have angered the heavenly King; therefore, I wish to mortify myself to subdue my desires and my craving for honour. So that I may cause the servant to submit to his Master and the maidservant to her Mistress in heaven.[1] I also wish to perform the commandment of repentance and to mortify myself. So that I am able to serve God, may He be blessed, in truth and with a perfect heart, with love and awe. So that there should be a divine unification [of the *Shekhinah*] through me. Therefore, I wish to mortify myself in order to offer myself up as a sacrifice before Him. Woe is me, what am I and what is my life, that I should want to offer up my fat and blood, my body, my fire, spirit, soul, strength, and my heart before Him, before the Creator of all the worlds. All the worlds were made with His words, and everything is as nothing before him. How much more so am I, made up of dust and worms. I can ask nothing except that from His great mercy he increase my strength to offer up many sacrifices before Him. It is good for me to rejoice greatly that I have the merit that from my body, spirit and soul pleasure is caused [to God].

The Festival of Pentecost (*Shavuot*) and Divine Marriage

'Zohar' 1:8a, Introduction

Some of the festivals play a special role in the consciousness of the mystics because of the underlying imagery of the activity within the divine world represented by their rituals.

Rabbi Simeon was sitting and was engaged in Torah study on the night[2] when the divine Bride [*Shekhinah*] is joined in sexual union with Her Husband [*Tiferet*]. For we have been taught that all the members of the palace of the Bride,[3] during the night preceding the day that the Bride will be invited under the wedding canopy [*chupah*] with Her Husband, need to keep Her company all that night [*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*],[4] and to rejoice with Her in the preparations [*tikkun*] that She is making. [They do this by] engaging in the study of the Torah, proceeding from the Pentateuch to the Prophets, from the Prophets to the Hagiographa, then to Midrashic interpretations of Scripture and to the mysteries of Wisdom [Kabbalah]. For these represent Her preparations and Her adornments. She comes in with Her maidens, and remains at their head. She adorns herself through them[1] and rejoices with them all that night. On the next day She enters the wedding canopy only in their company, for they are called the attendants of the canopy. When she enters the wedding canopy, the Holy One, blessed be He, asks about them, blesses them and crowns them with a bridal crown. Happy is their lot!

Rabbi Simeon and all the companions were chanting the song of the Torah, each of them finding new discoveries in the Torah. Rabbi Simeon and all the companions rejoiced. Rabbi Simeon said to them, 'My children, happy is your lot, for tomorrow the Bride will not enter the wedding canopy except with you; for all those who arrange her preparations on that night, and rejoice in Her, will be recorded and written down in the book of remembrance. The Holy One, blessed be He, will bless them with seventy blessings and with heavenly crowns.'

Sabbath (*Shabbat*) and Festivals (*Yomtov*)

‘Likkutei Halakhot’, Orach Chaim Hilkhot Yom Tov, *halakhah* 1,
vol. 3, p. 173, by Nathan of Nemirov

The rituals of the sacred calendar were understood by Kabbalah as reflections of the deeper world of good and evil, of holiness and impurity. Here is a reflection on the contrast between the Jewish Sabbath and festive days throughout the year.

After one returns to one’s individual ego, having first nullified oneself before the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*] where all goodness resides, then from the impression which remains light is drawn. From this residue of light one can know that the Lord is God and is totally good. This idea is reflected in the Sabbath [*Shabbat*] and Festivals [*Yomtov*]. For the Sabbath is the goal which is totally good, the goal of heaven and earth, the goal which transcends all creation, a reflection of the [Messianic] day, which is a time entirely of Sabbath, for then it will be totally good.

Therefore, the Sabbath is a day of complete and absolute rest. A festival, however, is merely a reflection of the light drawn from the nullification of self represented by the Sabbath, symbolizing [the move back from] the Infinite Godhead to the ego-self, which is this world. This mundane world is made up of time[1] and of space, so that all the peoples of the world will know, even in this world of days and dimensions, that the Lord is God and is totally good… Therefore, the essence of the holiness of the festivals depends upon Israel, as Scripture says: ‘These are the festive days of the Lord which you shall pro-claim.’[2]… The Sabbath, however, is independently holy. As our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, say: ‘The Sabbath has been fixed and established’, while ‘the festivals are sanctified by Israel’.[3] The reason is that the Sabbath itself is the very goal [of Creation], it is independently holy so it does not need holiness to be drawn on to it [from elsewhere]. On the contrary all holiness is derived from it.

CHAPTER 10
DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

AVOIDING DEATH

Redemption from Death through Name Change

'Sefer Chasidim' 245

The importance of names in relation to identity is manifest in various Kabbalistic contexts. Here it is used to save someone from death.

If a decree has gone out against an individual with a certain name, and he has reached death's door, then if one changes his name,[1] he will live. This is exemplified by the Scriptural verse, 'A son has been born to Naomi',[2] when actually the son had been born to Ruth. An example of this is the case of someone… who has a son who is critically ill. A certain individual… comes to the child's parents and says to them: Take this coin *[shekel],* bread, meat and wine, and I will redeem your son so that he will become my son, and live. This is what we do for a person whose children die prematurely, and it is not considered a form of prohibited black magic *[nichush].*

Name Changing to Avoid Early Death

'Aliyyot Eliyahu', p. 27, note 51, by Joshua Heshel Levin

Names of individuals reflect their status and identity, so if someone's Hebrew name is changed the angel of death who has been sent on a mission to kill him won't be able to find him. This selection is from traditions about Elijah of Vilna (1720–97).

There is a magical remedy [*segulah*] for those whose children die, heaven forbid. They should call the child born next after a child

who has died, may the Merciful One save us, by the name of its sibling who died last, with the addition of a new name. The new name should come first and the name of the dead sibling should come last. The child will live. This magical remedy is tried and tested, for there was an incident with the daughter of Elijah, the sage [*gaon*] of Vilna, whose children died, may the Merciful One save us, and when another child was born to her, she followed the above advice from her father about naming. The child lived and also the other children, whom she gave birth to afterwards, lived.

AFTERLIFE

Life after Death of the Righteous

'Zohar' 3:71a–b, Acharei Mot

Here is a radical reinterpretation both of the prohibition against seeking help from the dead and of the nature of immortality of the righteous. Death is thought of as a state of separation from God for the wicked, whereas for the righteous life is something which transcends physical death; and death releases them from the limitations of space.

Rabbi Hezekiah and Rabbi Jesse arose and went on their way. They said: Surely when righteous people are not found in this world, the world is only sustained by [the saintly merits] of the dead. Rabbi Jesse remarked, that at the time when the world is in need of rain, why do we go to the dead?[1] Is it not prohibited 'to seek out the dead'?[2] Rabbi Hezekiah replied to him: You have not yet seen the wing of the bird of Eden.[3] The prohibition of seeking out the dead refers specifically to the dead, who are the wicked of the world, belonging to idolatrous nations, who are always dead. But King Solomon declared about Israel, who are truly virtuous, that 'I praise the dead who have already died.'[1] They have already died at a previous time but not now.[2] Now they are truly alive.

Furthermore, when other nations approach their dead, they come with witchcraft to awaken evil forces upon themselves. But when Israel approaches its dead, they come with a large measure of repentance before the Holy One, blessed be He, with a broken heart

and fasting before Him. All of this is in order that the holy souls would beseech mercy for them from the Holy One, and the Holy One has mercy on the world because of them.

Therefore, we have learnt that a righteous person, even though he leaves this world, he does not depart and does not disappear from all worlds. For he is found in all worlds more than when he was alive. For while alive he only exists in this world, whereas afterwards he is found in the three worlds.[3]

The Righteous Live on after Death

'Igeret Hakodesh' 27, by Shneur Zalman of Lyady

Liberated from the physical limitations of the body by death, the soul of a righteous person, a tzaddik*, is present on earth in the consciousness of his disciples. Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730–88) was an early Russian Chasidic leader.*

[To the disciples of Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, as comfort for his death.]

His spirit remains literally in our midst. This is so when he sees his children, the work of his hands,[4] in his midst sanctifying His [God's] name, may He be blessed. [God's name] is magnified and sanctified when we proceed in the straightforward way that he [Menachem Mendel] taught us according to his approach and we walk in his paths forever.… This is what the holy Zohar says: 'The righteous though they have departed are found more in all the worlds than they were while alive.'[1] We need to understand this for while it makes sense for him[2] to be found more in the upper worlds, having ascended there, how can he be found more in this world? One can answer… that the life of a righteous man [*tzaddik*] is not a corporeal life, but a spiritual life consisting of faith, awe and love.… These three qualities exist in all worlds up to the very highest levels, everything according to the level of the worlds, one higher than the other by way of cause and effect, as is known. Behold, while a righteous man lives on earth, these three qualities are enveloped in their vessel and clothing in the physical realm, which is the vital soul [*nefesh*] bound up with his body. All of his students only receive a light spark from these qualities, an illumination that

shines outside of this vessel through his words and holy thoughts.… After his death, however, since the vital soul, which remains in the grave, is now separate from the spirit [*ruach*], which is in the Garden of Eden, and which is these three qualities, those who are close to him are able to receive a portion of his spirit, which is in the Garden of Eden. This is because it is not contained within a vessel nor part of the realm of the physical… It is also written… that the aura of the Garden of Eden spreads out around a person, and in this aura are recorded all his good thoughts, words of Torah and service of God. The same is true the other way round,[3] heaven forbid, they are recorded in the aura of Purgatory [*Gehinnom*], which spreads around every person.

Therefore, it is very easy for his disciples to receive their portion from the essential aspect of the spirit of their master, namely his faith, awe and love with which he served God. Not merely from an illumination that shone beyond the vessel, because the essential aspect of his spirit has ascended, level after level, to be included in the aspect of his higher soul in the Garden of Eden in the upper worlds. It is known that a holy thing cannot be entirely and completely uprooted from its place and original level, even after it has ascended to higher levels. In this original aspect, which remains below in the lower Garden of Eden, in its place and original level, it spreads to his disciples, each one according to his connection and closeness to him in his life and after his death.

BURIAL

Burial and the Cave of Machpelah

‘Zohar’ 1:248b, Vayechi

The Cave of Machpelah in Hebron is one of the most sacred sites for Jews in the Holy Land. Here its significance is explained.

> Jacob finished commanding his sons, he gathered his feet up on to the bed and died.’[1]

Why was he commanding them rather than blessing them? Well, he was commanding them regarding the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*], telling them to bind themselves to Her.

Further he commanded them concerning the Cave of Machpelah, which is near to the Garden of Eden. There Adam, the first man, is buried.

Come and see. That place is called *Kiryat Arba*, 'City of the Four'.[2] What is the reason? Because four couples are buried there: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. A question presents itself. For we have learnt that the Patriarchs are the holy chariot [*merkabah*],[3] and a chariot must contain at least four. We have learnt that the Holy One, blessed be He, joined King David to them,[4] and they made up a complete chariot.… If so David should have been buried with the Patriarchs, and it would be the City of Four with him. What was the reason he was not buried with them? Well, King David had a [different] suitable place prepared for him to be joined with [in burial], and that was Zion. Adam is indeed buried with the Patriarchs, or rather they were actually buried with him… Otherwise how could the Patriarchs manage to continue existing till King David came?[1] So he [King David] merited his own rightful place and, therefore, was not buried with the Patriarchs. Further, the Patriarchs represent the dimension of masculinity while David represents that of femininity [*Shekhinah*]. Thus the Patriarchs had their female partners buried with them.

DEATH AND DYING

Death and the Angel of Death

'Zohar' 3:126a–127a, Naso

Although the Bible does not say very much about the process of dying, about death itself or the fate of the soul after death, these subjects were greatly expanded upon in post-biblical Judaism and particularly in mystical texts.

A person walks around in this world and regards it as his personal

possession forever. He [thinks] he will remain there from generation to generation. Even while he walks around in the world, however, he has already been put in chains. Thus while he sits, he is judged in the company of the others being judged. If he can find a defence counsel, he is saved from judgement.… What is this defence counsel? It is the good deeds of a person which stand up for him in the hour of his need. If there is no defence counsel, then he is found guilty and the judgement is for him to be removed from the world.… At the time he is taken out to the grave[,]… they make three proclamations, one before him, one to his right and one to his left, saying:

> This is so and so[1] who has rebelled against his Master, has rebelled above and rebelled below, has rebelled against the Torah and against the commandments. Behold his deeds, behold his words, it would have been better had he never been created.

This goes on till they reach the grave site, where all of the dead tremble in anger against him from their places and say: Woe, woe, that this person is being buried among us.

His deeds and words precede him into the grave, standing over the body, while his spirit, mourning for the body, moves around and hovers.… When the spirit is about to depart, having taken its leave from all of the body, the Divine Presence *[Shekhinah]* stands above it, and the spirit immediately flies away from the body. Happy is the portion of the person who cleaves to Her *[Shekhinah]*. Woe to the wicked person who is far from Her and does not cleave to Her.

Death of the Righteous and Angels

'Etz Chaim', shaar 27, anaf 1

Angels, as personified divine forces, play a major role in the Kabbalistic outlook. They are of different orders, but even the ones at the top of the hierarchy, who accompany humans after death, are unable to penetrate to the levels that are available to the righteous soul.

There is a secret meaning of the verse, 'Behold the valiant angels cry outside.'[2] Our Sages say that even the Angels of Peace are

unable to enter into inner levels.[3] We need to understand why they say 'even' and why these angels are different from others.… We can, however, understand the matter if we consider that angels are from an outer level of spirituality and souls are from an inner level. There are indeed angels that are closer to the souls of the righteous than other angels, and they are called Angels of Peace. One might have thought that since these angels receive the souls of the righteous when they leave this world, they have an advantage over others,… therefore, because of this special character it would have been possible for these angels to enter into the inner world with the souls. Hence we are told that even they must remain outside and cannot enter within.

Death, the Soul and Resurrection

'Otzrot Chaim', shaar 248, 'Sparks', anaf 1, by Chaim Vital

The belief in the resurrection of the body was one of several about the fate of the individual after death. Here an explanation is offered as to how the identity of the deceased was maintained.

After man, in his mundane condition in this world, dies his soul departs from him. Yet a part of his soul remains within his body, so that through this he is able to rise up at the Resurrection of the Dead. This is referred to in the Zohar as 'the breath of the bones'.[1]

Death and Original Sin

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Adam Harishon

This relates death not to Original Sin decreed by God as the condition of man, but to human responsibility for sin, and would seem to reflect an anti-Christian polemic.

[God said]: Adam, the first man, did not find any fault in Me. It is like the case of a sick man who came to a doctor. The doctor told him to eat certain things and not to eat other things. When he disobeyed [the doctor] and ate what was forbidden, he brought about his own death.

When Adam transgressed and ate [the forbidden fruit], all future generations of his descendants came to him and said: Perhaps the Holy One, blessed be He, has decreed against you with His aspect of judgement that you should die?

He said to them, Heaven forbid, it was I who transgressed against a command of the Holy One and caused death for myself because I ate [the forbidden fruit].

Death and Its Causes

'Chesed Le-avraham' 5:30

This is a reflection on why people die, and how inheritance can involve the sins of the parents.

Know that no one dies except because of the mistakes he has made throughout his life, that is 'A man will die through his sin.'[1] However, the sins are also left afterwards to his children, so that they will receive suffering for the sins of their fathers, as it says, 'Visiting the sins of the fathers on children'.[2] The father gives part of his soul to his son, and that part becomes a garment for the son's soul. Thus the son has a duty to respect his father, and this [garment] remains with him even to the Days of the Messiah, although not in the World to Come *[Olam Ha-ba],* for then everyone will return completely to the source of his own soul alone [not encumbered by his father's sins].

Death and Punishment

'Chesed Le-avraham' 5:1

A reflection on the process of dying and the role of the Angel of Death.

We have learnt in the first chapter of Chibbut Ha-Kever[3] as follows:

What happens when a man dies. Four angels come to him. One is a ministering angel, one is an angel of death, one is a scribe and one is appointed over him and says to him, 'Arise for your end has come.'

He, however, says to them, 'My end has not yet come.' He

immediately opens his eyes and sees an angel whose width is from one end of the world to the other. From the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, he is full of eyes, his garments are fire, his clothing is fire, he is entirely fire and he has a knife in his hand on the end of which a bitter drop is suspended. From this [drop] his [the man's] body will become putrid, and from this his face will turn green.

A person does not die till he sees the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says: 'For no man shall see me and live.'[1] This means that in their lifetime they cannot see [God], but after their death they can.… Immediately he testifies about himself, recounting all that he has done in this world. He testifies and the Holy One, blessed be He, seals [the testimony].

If he is righteous [*tzaddik*], he hands over his soul to its true Owner, but if he is completely wicked, he becomes arrogant[2] and increases his Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*]. From here our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, said that even when a man dies, his Evil Inclination overcomes him.[3]

[The anthology by Chesed Le-avraham comments:]

… The Angel of Death has control over every being which exists. He can cause all of them to sin. He has eyes to pay attention and to know the measure of their sin and exactly how much to punish according to the will of the Creator, exactly in relation to his garment and covering of the judgement of fire. Before this he comes to the man to make him sin with many temptations in all kinds of worldly things. Now[4] he shows all the judgements in these matters, and the person does not die before he sees his Creator. For they do not punish him until he sees his Creator and understands whom he has sinned against, and what [damage] his sin has caused, and he accepts his judgement upon himself. He testifies about the sin and the Holy One, blessed be He, seals the punishment. This is the note in the hand of the Angel of Death, to punish him according to his wickedness. If he is righteous, he gives himself over to death, accepts it with a pleasant face and cleaves to holiness. If he is wicked, he resists, exits this life with force and does not attach himself to the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*].

Purgatory (*Gehinnom*) and Exile

‘Chesed Le-avraham’ 5:11

A parallel between the cleansing of the sinful soul after death and the cleansing power of exile for Israel.

Sin causes a defect in the soul, and the defect is that it draws a spirit of impurity from the Evil Shells [*Kelippot*]. The soul becomes defective from this spirit of impurity, and it returns the soul into the fire of Purgatory [*Gehinnom*], the source of the spirit of impurity which flows over it. Everything goes back to its root; the fire of Purgatory consumes the spirit of impurity and returns it to itself. It [thus] separates from the soul, and then the soul remains pure and clean to return to its source, from which it was carved out.

… The same is true of the exile of Israel. For just as they [Israelites] are drawn after the Evil Shells and become impure in this world so the Holy One, blessed be He, exiles them to purify them through the mystery of exile. Through exile the people in general are purified, and they are refined through the mystery of Exile. The impurity that attaches itself to them through the sin of desecrating the Torah in the Land of Israel is consumed and nullified, bit by bit. At the time of the Redemption they will be clarified and whitened, so that they will go out of exile purified like refined silver.

THE SHADOW

The Shadow That Hovers

‘Zohar’ i04a-b, Emor Reiya Mehemna

Man has an astral body, here known as a shadow, which is given to him at birth and only leaves at death.

‘And God created man in his image.’[1] I have found in the book of King Solomon that at the time when sexual union takes place below, the Holy One, blessed be He, sends a form in human appearance, inscribed and engraved with the form of a shadow,[2] and it hovers over that sexual union. If the eye were given

permission to see, a person would see a shadow-form over his head, inscribed with a human visage.

In that shadow-form a human being is created. Until that shadow-form, which His master has sent, hovers overhead and is found there, no human is created. That is why it says 'God created man in his[3] image.'

This shadow-form is found with him until he leaves this world. When he leaves this world, he leaves it with this shadow-form, which has grown with him. This is what Scripture says: 'Surely a man walks with a shadow [form].'[4] This shadow-form comes from above.

The Shadow and Death

Zohar 1:217b, Vayechi

The shadow, Hebrew 'tzel' *and Aramaic* 'tzalma'*, is a reflection of the hidden 'astral body', known as* 'tzelem'*, which surrounds a person. The shadow is removed thirty days before death.*

Rabbi Judah said to Rabbi Isaac: How do you know [that you are about to die]?

Rabbi Isaac replied to him: Every night my soul leaves me and does not illuminate me[1] with dreams, as it used to do. Furthermore, when I am praying and I reach the section of the prayer asking God to hear our prayers,[2] I look at my shadow on the wall, but I cannot see it. I maintain that since the shadow has been removed from me and cannot be seen, therefore, a decree has been issued against me. For it is written, 'Surely a man walks [only] with a shadow.'[3] As long as the shadow of a person has not been removed from him, he can continue to walk on, and his spirit continues to exist in his body, but once a person's shadow has been removed and cannot be seen, he too is about to be removed from this world.

Protection from the Divine Shadow

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:55:3

This Chasidic variation on the theme of the mystic's dark night of the

soul sees the darkness as a positive way of perceiving, with spiritual insight, because normal vision is impaired.

When the hand of God is revealed, then a shadow is formed in which a righteous person can shield himself from the poison of the evil eye. This is a reflection of the verse: 'In the shadow of My hands I have covered you.'[4] For the eyes of the wicked in this bitter exile glare like a solid mirror, and the poison of their eyes can gaze over distances.… Through this shadow the light of the eyes [of the wicked] is dimmed and darkened, for the poison of their eyes is unable to cause damage.

The righteous, however, whose eyes only have a small light at the present time… have the light of their eyes strengthened by the shadow. This is true of those with weak eyes who are not able to see well when the light is strong and bright, and they need the shadow so that they should be able to see.… Through the shadow the light of the eyes of the righteous is strengthened and they are able to see at a distance,… and grasp the righteousness of God, may He be blessed. They know and understand that God is righteous, even though the wicked seem to avoid judgement and this is not righteous.

Man's Shadow and God's Light

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:172

By contrast to the divine shadow, which illuminates, the human shadow is a product of sin and blocks out the divine light.

All the problems that a person has, whether with children, or a livelihood, or health, all stem from the person himself. For the light of God, may He be blessed, flows upon a person continuously but, through his evil deeds, he makes a shadow for himself. The light of God thus does not reach him. According to the nature of his deeds so is the shadow that obscures the light of God. The problems come upon a person according to the deeds through which the shadow is formed.… If, however, man nullifies himself, and is not in any way part of this world, then he does not make a shadow and he can receive the light of God. The main part of the light of God is the divine glory, for everything which the Holy One created He only

created for His glory.… This is indicated in the verse, 'The whole world is full of His glory.'[1] Thus, if a person is 'not from any part of the world', that is he is not at all part of this world, then he is able to receive the light of God.… For it is said, 'Wisdom will be found from nothingness.'[2] Therefore, the wise men, who are 'nothing', merit the Glory, because they do not produce the shadow to divide them from God, for they have no physicality.

REINCARNATION

Belief in Reincarnation

'Maharalbach' 8, by Levi ben Chabib

Reincarnation, the belief that after death souls are reborn in different life forms, is central to most types of Kabbalah. It was also controversial, with a number of non-mystical rabbis declaring that it was not a Jewish doctrine at all. Others were more ambiguous, while the mystics themselves argued both for its truth and for its antiquity. Rabbi Levi ben Chabib, known as Maharalbach, was a Spanish halakhic *authority. Escaping from Portugal, where he and his father were apparently forcibly baptized, he became Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem.*

Regarding the… question which you asked, whether the belief in reincarnation is something which everyone must believe in, and if it is even permitted to preach about it in public? You should know that for my sins I have not yet merited to attain to this [Kabbalistic] wisdom. For it is not permitted for an individual to understand this by himself and to investigate it. Rather it is just as its name[1] implies, that is one needs to receive it from a master who in turn has also received it. At this time in our lands we do not find anyone who is a perfect master of it. Concerning this particular matter [of reincarnation], however, I have seen and understood what is written in books, and I have found that our Sages, who lived a long time after the close of the Talmud, were divided into two groups. One group were those who investigated the foundations of faith according to their own intellect alone, and they got involved with extraneous wisdom.[2] In their hearts it was hard to believe in this

belief [in reincarnation], because there are many questions which their intellect could not grasp in order to resolve them. There is, however, another very large group of the Sages of Israel who do believe in it, and they all write that this belief is true and is one of the fundamentals of the Torah in order to resolve the question of why righteous people suffer. We all have a duty to listen to the words of this latter group and to believe this belief without any hesitation or doubt at all. To expound it in public, however, certainly seems to be something that is very unsuitable, for we are not better than our forefathers and our rabbis, peace be upon them. They wrote about [reincarnation] in their books, but never spoke about it except through hints and riddles, and they wrote that it was a great mystery.

Justification of Reincarnation

'Avodat Hakodesh' 2:32, by Meir ibn Gabbai

Although the Bible and Talmud grappled with the problem of theodicy: 'Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?', it was only the Kabbalists who were able to tackle this problem head on through the doctrine of reincarnation.

The men of truth and righteousness [the Kabbalists] have received a tradition that souls that sin and rebel against their Creator, having spoiled their path, will return to the days of their youth to correct their crooked ways, to build up the holes in their fences. If at first they do not succeed, then they return a second and a third time. In the Zohar[1] it is said about this that it is comparable to a man who planted a tree, saw that it was unsuccessful, so he uprooted it and replanted it in another place, and so on many times more.… The Sages of truth have said that the mystery of why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper depends on this subject.… Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? The reason is because the righteous person was a wicked person in the past, and now he receives his punishment.

Men and Women Reincarnate Together as Spouses

‘Zohar’ 2:106a, Saba of Mishpatim

A romantic dimension of the doctrine of reincarnation is the idea that husbands and wives, if they are worthy, transmigrate together to be married once again in the next life.

If he came by himself, he shall go out by himself.[1]

This means that if a person came into this world single, without children,[2] and did not want to engage in this activity,[3] even now he departs this world single without seed. He leaves [dies] like a stone that which is hurled from a sling.… This is the meaning of the verse, ‘If he came by himself, he shall go out by himself.’ The reference is to a man who refused to get married and beget children.

‘If he is married’,[4] that is if he has married a wife and tried to have children with her unsuccessfully, then he is not thus driven out alone like the other person; he does not enter alone or go out alone. For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not hold back the reward of any creature, even though he has not merited having any children.

‘His wife will go out with him’, this means that both [husband and wife] transmigrate together. They merit uniting once again as they were before. Such a man does not marry a divorced woman,[5] but marries the woman who was previously his wife but did not merit bearing him children. Now they both may gain merit together,[6] if they rectify their deeds. That is why it says, ‘His wife will go out with him.’

Reincarnation Not for Females

‘Sefer Hagilgulim’ 13

The details of who reincarnates, when and how were open to different views.

You should know that men reincarnate until they have been fully rectified. The souls of women, however, have neither service *[avodah]*[1] nor reincarnation *[gilgul]*. Their sins are only removed through Purgatory *[Gehinnom]*.

Reincarnation Only for Males, Not for Females

'Chesed Le-avraham' 5:20

Reincarnation allows one to rectify failings in one's life, which may not be necessary for those, including women, who are punished after death for their sins.

You should know that it is males that always transmigrate, but women do not transmigrate. Rather they come into the world through the mystery of soul impregnation with the soul sparks. Therefore, there are more women than men, for judgements are more numerous than elements of compassion.… The reason why women do not reincarnate is because men engage in the [study of] Torah, and they [men] do not enter Purgatory. Therefore, they need to reincarnate. Women, however, are punished in Purgatory and therefore they do not need to reincarnate again.

Nonetheless, sometimes women do indeed transmigrate because of their husbands, as it says in Scripture, 'His wife will go out with him.'[2] As mentioned in the Zohar.[3]

The Need for Reincarnation

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 4

On a religious level the transmigration of the individual is a chance for a soul to fulfil all of God's commandments in multiple reincarnations.

Every spark of a soul needs to perform rectification [*tikkun*] of the 613 commandments [*mitzvot*], and if one commandment is missing then he will need to be reincarnated for it.[1] Not only this but a person needs to fulfil all 613 commandments in action, in speech and in thought. If any spark of a soul is lacking even one element of these three, then it is requisite for him to be reincarnated until he has fulfilled all of them. The same is true for someone who has not engaged in [the study of] Torah in its levels of plain meaning, hints, homiletic meaning and mystical meaning [*Pardes*]. He will have to be reincarnated in order to engage [with Torah] at all levels, each individual according to the portion he is able to achieve and according to the aspect of his [soul] root.[2] This [Torah for each

individual] being the portion given to him at Sinai.

Reincarnation and Resurrection

'Pri Etz Chaim', Arvit of Rosh Hashanah 6

Although the belief in the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic age was well established among non-mystical Jews, the Kabbalists saw it as a limiting case of the doctrine of reincarnation.

On the day of the New Year [*Rosh Hashanah*],[3] there is judgement about the reincarnation [*gilgul*] of higher souls [*neshamah*], who will return to this world. Therefore, it is mentioned in the blessing about the Resurrection of the Dead [*Techiyat Ha-metim*].[4] For this [reincarnation] is included in the subject of resurrection.… Through the reincarnation of souls we are able to believe in the Resurrection of the Dead in future times because it is all one similar idea.

Tzaddikim Attract Extra Righteous Souls

'Etz Hadaat Tov', Va-Etchanan

The doctrine of reincarnation allowed for the possibility of several souls occupying the same body.

After a righteous man wakes up from his sleep at night, his vital soul [*nefesh*] returns to him. It is possible, through the good deeds that he has done, that his soul will draw forth and bring with it the soul of some righteous person [*tzaddik*] from the past, and is impregnated by it [the soul from the past] through the mystery of Soul Impregnation [*Ibbur*]. This [extra soul from the past] comes to aid him.

Reincarnation and Epilepsy

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 34

Multiple souls in one body explain a number of psychological and physical conditions.

Sometimes there is the vital soul [*nefesh*] of an evil person, whose soul is not yet able to enter Purgatory [*Gehinnom*] because of his many sins, so it wanders to and fro and occasionally enters the body of a man or a woman and causes them to fall over, and this is called epilepsy.[1]

Reincarnation and Eating Bad Souls

'Shulchan Arukh Ha-Ari' 25

Reincarnation can take place into food items, and can influence the eater.

If a person, who is not righteous, eats a food item in which a truly wicked person is,[1] not only does he not rectify it [the reincarnated soul], but it [the reincarnated wicked soul] transforms him [the eater] into a wicked person like he is.

Reincarnation and Singular Rectification

'Pri Etz Chaim', shaar Kavvanat Amen 4

Where souls have only one remaining commandment to fulfil, which will lead to transmigration, they need to devote themselves to it.

Someone who has yet to be reincarnated because of one individual detail [that he has failed to perform correctly] must rectify [*tikkun*] things in the following manner. If an action [associated with that detail] arises for him, then he must be willing to die in order to do it.

Reincarnation and Impregnation While Alive

'Shaar Hagilgulim', Introduction 3

Multiple souls can occupy one body simply because of a shared destiny.

It sometimes happens that the opportunity to perform a commandment [*mitzvah*] comes to a person, and he performs it in a

full and proper manner. Then a certain soul from a righteous person [*tzaddik*] of a previous age, who himself also performed that commandment fully in a proper manner, presents itself to him. Since they share a similarity with regard to this commandment, the soul of this righteous man impregnates him. Not only this but it is also possible that even when this righteous man is a living contemporary of his,[2] his soul will impregnate him.… For when that man performs a certain commandment, or a number of commandments, that relate to that righteous person, because like him he has also performed them in a proper manner, then the soul of the righteous person impregnates him, although they are both alive at the same time. This is the mystical meaning of the verse that says the soul of Jonathan was attached to David.[1] For, while they were both alive together, the soul of David impregnated Jonathan.

Reincarnation of Two Souls Together

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Ki Tetze

Souls can adopt other souls in the process of reincarnation, where they share tasks in common.

Sometimes it is decreed about a higher soul [*neshamah*] that it should descend into this world to clothe itself in a certain [seminal] drop, and in the process of descending from above, it meets another soul that needs to reincarnate in order to rectify itself. Then this soul has the power to take the other soul with it and to transmigrate with it. The two of them enter that physical seminal drop. If the main soul of the body of this man has merit, it completes the portion assigned to it. While the other reincarnated soul, which it took with it, has not yet completed its own deficit, which is that commandment [*mitzvah*]. It was because of this that it transmigrated [in the first place] in order to rectify it. There is no power in the first soul to clothe itself in its own spirit [*ruach*] until the other reincarnated soul completes its task. All this only happens when these two souls have a close relationship between them, for if this were not so they would not transmigrate together. This will sometimes happen when these two souls lack the same commandment, therefore, they transmigrate and perform this

commandment together and thus both complete their task.

Reincarnation into Animals and Vegetables

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Ekev

Sins can lead to reincarnation into much lower forms than human life.

There are wicked people who, because of their many sins, are reincarnated [*gilgul*] after their death in animals, which are at a lower level than they are. Now through their sins they are on the same level as them[1] and actually transmigrate into them. There are some people who are completely wicked and they reincarnate into inanimate matter. This is the mystical meaning of the verse: 'A stone will cry out from the wall.'[2]

Reincarnation as Raven, Dog, etc., for Cruelty

'Sefer Hagilgulim', Likkutim

There is a pattern of just punishment in the way sinning souls transmigrate.

The punishment of a person who behaves cruelly to poor people, with regard to the collection of taxes, with cruelties like removing their cloaks from their shoulders and their beds from under their bodies, is to be reincarnated [in the next life] as a cruel raven. The punishment of a person who delivers up money belonging to Israelites into the hands of idolaters, through acting as an informer, is to become a barking dog. A person who spreads evil gossip and similar things will be reincarnated into a mute stone.

Reincarnation of Male into Female

'Shaar Hagilgulim', Introduction 9

Souls have a sexual identity, and therefore, male souls can enter a female body and vice versa, with problematic consequences.

It sometimes happens that a man is reincarnated into the body of a woman, because of a sin,[1] such as having engaged in homosexuality and the like. This female, with the reincarnated male soul, is not able to conceive a child and give birth, because she does not have an aspect of the female waters[2] to draw up and receive a drop of the male waters. This woman needs great merit for her to be able to become pregnant and give birth. There is no other option than that another female soul should impregnate her according to the mystery of soul impregnation [*ibbur*]. Thus with the combined power of her female partner she is able to draw up the female waters, can become pregnant and give birth.

It is impossible, however, for her to give birth to male children. The reasons are first, because Scripture says, 'When a woman brings forth seed and bears a male child',[3] whereas here the woman is actually a male, like her husband. So she is not able to have male children only female ones. The second reason is as follows. The extra female soul which has entered her has only done so according to the mystery of soul impregnation, to help her to conceive and give birth. Therefore, once this woman gives birth the extra soul, which is there according to the mystery of soul impregnation, does not need to remain. Thus, at the time she gives birth, that extra soul enters the embryo, and the child is born female and not male. This is now a real reincarnation and not spiritual impregnation as before. So we find that it is impossible for any woman who has such a male soul to give birth to a male rather than a female child. The female child that she gives birth to has the same female soul that entered her originally to aid her, according to the mystery of soul impregnation.

Sometimes it happens, however, that at the time the child is being born the extra female soul that was there, according to the mystery of soul impregnation, leaves and goes away. Then through a great and wonderful merit, a male soul enters the child and it is born as a male. After this it is impossible for the woman to give birth another time, except if the original extra female soul returns and impregnates her as at first. Therefore, if the first child is a female, this girl child would now need to die.[1] For perhaps the soul[2] will return to impregnate the woman as at first, so she will become pregnant, conceive and give birth to a female child. For the child's soul is from this female who has impregnated its mother, according to the mystery of soul impregnation. In this way the

process of impregnation and reincarnation continues many times.… If the woman gives birth to a male child, however, then the child does not need to die.

Ritual Slaughter (*Shechitah*) and Reincarnation

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Re-eh

A soul can be reincarnated into an animal and one way that it can achieve rectification is for the animal to be ritually killed so it can be reborn next time in human form.

A ritual slaughterer [*shochet*] should have two intentions in mind [during the slaughter of an animal]. The first should be to modify[3] the judgements and the strict justice through ritual slaughter [*shechitah*]. The second is to have the intention to complete the punishment of that reincarnation [*gilgul*][4] and to rectify it so that it is suitable, after that, to come into a human body when it is reborn, like other fit [*kasher*] human souls. For the matter is as follows: through the ritual slaughter judgements are lessened and therefore, light and life force are drawn down to the soul reincarnated there. Through this it is rectified and it can return to the world like other souls.

Reincarnation and Impregnation

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 4, by Chaim Vital

A different view on soul impregnation – that it can only happen to a mature person – and an explanation of its purposes. Compare what Vital said pp. 258–9 on the possibility of soul impregnation at birth.

What is reincarnation [*gilgul*] and what is soul impregnation [*ibbur*]? You should know that reincarnation is as follows: when an embryo is leaving its mother's womb, a soul enters its body. This soul will suffer all the pain and distress which affects that body from the time that it is born[1] until it dies. This soul has no permission to leave the body until the day of death.

By contrast soul impregnation is when a secondary soul comes

down into this world and enters into a person, who has already been born in the world, once they have grown up. Such a person is like a pregnant woman who has an embryo in her womb.

Therefore, this is called soul impregnation. This happens when a person, apart from his main soul which entered him at the time that he was born is impregnated by another, secondary, soul after he has grown up. It is impossible for any soul to impregnate a person, according to the mystery of soul impregnation, until he is at least thirteen years old. That is from thirteen years and one day onwards, when an individual is already an adult [*ish*][2] and is responsible for keeping the commandments [*mitzvot*]. A soul may come to aid him, to generate merit for him and to guide him in the commandments and in Torah.

The subject of soul impregnation can be divided into two parts. The first is when this new soul that comes to impregnate a person does so for its own needs. This is because this new soul is lacking a certain commandment, which it did not perform in a previous incarnation. This would be one of the commandments that it did not have an opportunity to perform.[3]…

Therefore, it impregnates this person in order to perform that commandment which is lacking. It is also possible, however, that it impregnates the person for the sake of the person himself, to aid him, to give him merit and to guide him, while this extra soul does not actually lack anything for itself.

There is a difference between them, however, for the impregnating soul which comes for the sake of completing its own lack spreads throughout the body of that person, just like the original soul of the body itself. It suffers all the pain and distress of that body just like the original soul. It remains there till that commandment which it lacked is performed. After it is performed, then the soul leaves the person and departs. The extra soul which comes for the sake of aiding the person, however, does not suffer any of the distress and pain of the body at all. This is because it does not lack anything and has not come out of its own need. Also it does not have any fixed time to leave. It is there through its own choice and if the person improves his deeds, the extra soul remains there. The more that a person increases in goodness, the more the soul binds itself to him. If, by contrast, the person behaves very badly, then it leaves the person… and departs from him.

Simeon bar Yochai a Reincarnation of Moses

'Likkutei Shas' (on Shabbat 33b)

Attempts were made by Lurianic Kabbalists to identify reincarnations of famous figures from the past.

You should know that Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, was an incarnated spark of Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him. Just as Moses had to flee from the sword of Pharaoh and gained his spiritual perfection there in the wilderness, so thus also Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai fled from the Roman authorities[1] and gained his spiritual perfection there in a cave in the wilderness of Lod.

Reincarnation into Birds

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 6

Souls reincarnated in birds can communicate heavenly secrets through their twittering, and indeed righteous souls can simply appear as birds to some while revealing secrets to others.

With regard to the twittering of birds. There are human souls [*neshamot*] which transmigrate into those birds or into other different kinds of creatures. All of this is caused by their sins. These souls know what they knew at the beginning, but they also know what will happen in the future, according to what they have heard from the voice of proclamation behind the *Pargod*.[1] They then tell [people] these matters.[2]

Sometimes this happens in a completely different way. For the soul of a certain righteous person [*tzaddik*] comes from the world above and clothes itself in that form and image, but it is not really a creature or a bird. It simply appears like them and is seen that way [by others]. He reveals and tells mysteries of the Torah and similar matters.

[These righteous people] appear before others, however, according to the spiritual level of those who see them. Sometimes they appear before two people together. To one person they will appear in the form of a bird or other creature, and to the second

person they appear before him in a completely different manner. Everything depends on the spiritual level of the person who sees them.

Soul Elevation and Reincarnation

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Ekev

The doctrine of reincarnation has a practical aspect in that the assistance of a mystic master can be sought to help a lowly reincarnated soul rise up to be reborn once again in human form.

Sages, through the merit of their Torah, have the power to rectify [*tikkun*] [reincarnated souls] and to raise them one level higher, that is from the animal level to a human one. Sages who know the mystical wisdom of the Zohar have the power to raise [a reincarnated soul] two levels, that is from a vegetable level [to a human one], and certainly from an animal level to a human one. While those Sages who are experts in the very root of the true mystical knowledge are able to raise [a reincarnated soul] even from the level of inanimate matter to a human one, and obviously from an animal level to a human one.

Reincarnation as Plants and Mixed Species (*Kilayim*)

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Kedoshim

Prohibitions on the mixing of plants relate to the different kinds of souls that may have reincarnated in them.

Anyone who sins needs to be reincarnated after their death in order to receive their punishment. There are some who do not merit coming back to this world in the same way as other souls. By contrast they reincarnate into vegetable or inorganic matter, into animals or into the body of a living human. There is a fixed time for the duration of such a reincarnation. Thus we find that there are reincarnated souls in different kinds of plants, for instance trees and seeds, until the completion of the decreed time [they must spend there]. If one grafts together a hybrid of seeds and trees, one will

cause evil and further punishment to those souls which have reincarnated in them. For some souls have reincarnated into one type [of plant] and some into a different type [of plant], and they are not all equal. Therefore, one should not mix different plants together, which is the prohibition of *Kilayim*.[1]

The Purpose of Reincarnation

'Maggid Mesharim', Introduction

A general statement of the way reincarnation affects all things.

[The daemon is speaking:]

Everything transmigrates,… and human souls also transmigrate continuously.

Whenever a thing transmigrates it is for the purpose of elevation, for when the soul returns to this world, it is in order to rise up to a higher level. This is true of all things, even when they transmigrate to a lowly level, it is in order to eventually rise up to a higher level. This is because it is the desire and longing of everything to cleave to the First Cause [i.e. God]. Therefore, all things transmigrate time after time, and even souls transmigrate continuously, until they merit rising up and cleaving to the First Cause.

Reincarnation of up to Four Souls in One Body

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 5

Multiple reincarnations can take place within limits.

You should know that it is possible that one, two, three or even four higher souls [*neshamah*] can reincarnate [*gilgul*] together into one body [*guf*]. It is impossible, however, for there to be more than four souls together in one body.

Transmigration of Sinners

'Chesed Le-avraham' 5:24

Reincarnation presents an opportunity for rectification of sins, but it is also a punishment for them.

You should know that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not reincarnate the soul of a wicked person more than three times… That is three times into a human form. The fourth time he transmigrates into a pure animal.[1] When a person comes to offer up a sacrifice, the Holy One miraculously brings to him an animal into which a human soul has transmigrated. We thus find that the sacrifice fulfils two functions: [the first] is for the bringer of the sacrifice and [the second] for the soul that is incarnated in the animal, for through the religious slaughter of the animal it receives its punishment and its atonement. Through the ascent of the smoke of the sacrifice, the soul ascends above and returns to its harmonious condition.… Know that there are four known serious sins about which our Sages have said that one should be willing to die rather than transgress.[2] If a person who transgresses dies without repentance, he will be reincarnated into an unclean animal.[3]

These sins are sexually prohibited behaviour, murder and idolatry… The fourth, which is worse than all of them, is slander and gossip. The person who sins with sexually prohibited behaviour is reincarnated as a camel.… For idolatrous sins the sinner is reincarnated as a rabbit.… For murder the sinner is reincarnated as a pig,… but if the person [who commits the murder] is a high official or a prince he will be reincarnated as a dog.

It is specifically for one of the three serious sins, about which our Sages have said that one should be willing to die rather than transgress, that the sinner reincarnates into an unclean animal, and after that into a pure animal. For other sins, however, no Israelite will reincarnate into an unclean animal, only into a clean animal. Even for slander and gossip he reincarnates into a clean animal, but with defects in its legs. For the sin of slander into an animal with one [defective] leg, and for the sin of gossip into an animal with two [defective] legs.…

You should know that there is no spring or well or gathering of water or stream which does not have in it an infinite number of reincarnated souls. Therefore, it is not fitting for a person to put his mouth to a tap to drink, rather he should gather the water in [the palm of] his hand. For it is possible for one of these [souls] to

reincarnate into him… and then that evil soul will impregnate him. For sometimes through a certain sin something bad will happen to a person and then he will be impregnated by that evil soul which will then aid him to sin further.… Therefore, it is fitting for a person to be careful with making a blessing over the water that he drinks from a spring, and perhaps he will be saved from this.

The same is true of animals.[1] Therefore, a number of souls reincarnate into a person at all times through his eating and drinking. Someone who is a Sage, and eats with the correct spiritual intention, will be able to elevate and rectify those reincarnated souls. The contrary is also true, and those who do not have the correct intentions can be damaged by them and they can lead him to great sin.

The water brought from a spring into the house does not suffer the same danger;[2] nevertheless, it is good to pour out a little water before one drinks it even in one's house.

You should know that all of this generation, or the majority of them, were previously reincarnated as animals or wild beasts; therefore, they are arrogant and incomplete beings, apart from those few people whom God has specially called.

Reincarnation of the Righteous

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:200

Reincarnation can be used to affirm the justice of a world which seems unjust.

The reason that the righteous *[tzaddikim]* are wealthy in our day and yet in a previous age the majority were paupers and impoverished is hinted at in the Mishnah: 'All those who keep the Torah in poverty will in the end keep it as rich people.'[3]

The righteous in our day are the very same righteous of previous ages through the secret of reincarnation. They have already kept the Torah in poverty, and therefore, they now merit keeping it in wealth.

CHAPTER 11
THE DARK FORCES EVIL AND SIN

ABYSS

The Abyss and the Foundation Stone

'Zohar' 2:222a, Pekudei

The world is built over an abyss, and the holiness of the world is represented by concentric circles around a foundation point above this abyss. The holiest inner circle is that around the Temple in Jerusalem, where the Divine Presence was thought to dwell.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world He cast one precious stone from under the Throne of Glory, and it sank into the abyss. One end of that stone was planted in the abyss and the other end stuck out above. That other upper end is the one point which is at the centre of the world, and from there the world spread out to the right and to the left and to all sides. It exists on this central point and this stone is called the foundation [*shetiyah*],[1] for on it the world and all its dimensions are planted.…

The first dimension of expansion is the Temple, and all its halls and courtyards and all their infrastructure and Jerusalem and the whole city within the walls. The second dimension of expansion is the whole Land of Israel, which has been sanctified with holiness. The third dimension of expansion is all the other lands, the dwelling place of other nations, and the ocean that surrounds everything.

THE DARK POWERS OF EVIL

Levels of Worldly Existence

'Etz Chaim', shaar 39, derush 3

Good and evil exist at all levels of creation, and the task of man is to separate out the sparks of goodness from their entrapment in evil.

It is necessary that even with mineral matter, such as earth,[1] stones and similar things, that there should be a spiritual life force, a heavenly providence [*mazal*] and a guardian angel above. If this were not so the earth would not be able to bring forth herbs and seeds, if it had no life force in it.

The level of life force of vegetable matter is higher than that of mineral matter. For we see that its elements grow forth and increase like humans do. It is certain that the life force within it causes this growth. The life force of the animal kingdom is at a higher level, for it has a vital soul [*nefesh*] and in it [good and evil] are more separated [*berur*].… The life force of humans, who can speak, is at a still higher level. There is no creature in all the worlds which is not amenable to this process of separating out [good from evil].… The [good] can be separated out and emerge from the Shells [*Kelippot*].

The most elevated of things [have the good] separated out in the World of Emanation [*Atzilut*]. Those at a lower level [have the good] separated out in the World of Creation [*Beriah*]. Those at a still lower level [have the good separated out] in the World of Formation [*Yetzirah*], and those at the lowest level [are separated out] in the World of Action [*Ashiyah*].

In the World of Action itself… at a lower level than all of the above is what is called the filth of the dross of gold, about which nothing can be done. It is called the Shell, for it is impossible to separate it out. It consists of very strict laws, which are hard and strong, and this is the very Shell itself. Behold there must be small amounts of sparks of holiness inside the Shells.… A person needs to rectify them, to separate them out, and to raise them from level to level through his deeds.… When all of these have been separated out… then death will be swallowed up forever.…

This separating out is to raise [the good] at first through one level and after that to a greater level, and so on through all the levels.

Evil and the Soul

'Chesed Le-avraham' 4:35

The soul, in its various parts, is affected by sin.

Samael and his cohorts… take pleasure from evil deeds… and they are bound together through these evil deeds performed below. … Just as on the right side holiness stirs up the good and descends and gradually materializes itself until it reaches the lower levels, and there much good is generated: children, riches, acquisitions, knowledge, wisdom, life, honour and all good happenings. So exactly in the same way on the left side, judgement is stirred up and descends and gradually materializes itself until it reaches the point where it generates serious and severe illness, bad happenings and trials which are hard and worse than death. The conclusion is that the two structures are mirror images of each other and parallel to one another.…

You should know that when a person sins and his deeds sink down in the pit of pollution, then his vital soul [*nefesh*] is cut off and lost. Yet his spirit [*ruach*] and higher soul [*neshamah*] are never lost and cut off altogether. His higher soul, however, is affected and contaminated. The nature of this contamination is because the soul has emanated according to the levels which have descended, thus its form and nature remain in the place from which it has journeyed, level after level, until it reaches the body in this world. It is like a chain which has been lowered down, or a ladder standing on earth with its head reaching into heaven. Because of this even though the soul leaves the sinning body, the latter is still drawn to the soul through the unwound chain and is certainly contaminated. This contamination comes about in the following way. Just as the levels draw down the flow of holiness, so the levels draw down the impurity from the side of impurity. Someone who sanctifies himself, and makes his ways straight, draws down the flow of holiness from above on to his soul; similarly a person who leads himself astray and defiles his way below, also defiles his soul above and attaches himself to the Shells [*Kelippot*].

The measure of impurity is according to the value of the sins, and from there it will influence the body below. This impurity becomes the blemished stain in the soul which cannot be removed from it

except through repentance… For when a person repents, and humbles himself to the same degree that he has become attached to the Shells, he will break the Shells that he has entered and his soul will return to a holy place.

The Two Types of Evil Men

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot

The worst type of evil person is someone who is misled by the Evil Inclination to imagine that he is actually doing good.

There are two types of people. One who is completely wicked, who knows about His Master and yet intends to rebel against Him. The second is one whose eyes have been closed by the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*], which causes him to imagine that he is really completely righteous, and also other people suppose him to be completely righteous. In truth, however, although he is continually studying Torah and praying, and practising asceticism, all his efforts are, nevertheless, in vain. For he lacks attachment [*devekut*] to, and a perfect belief in, the Creator, may He be blessed. For it is fitting to be attached to Him at all times. Such a person does not know that the essence of service of God is to study, pray and perform the commandments for the sake of heaven.

The difference between these two types of people is that the completely wicked person can find a therapy for his wound. If an awakening to repentance comes over him and he returns to God with all his heart, then he seeks from God that He should show him the way where light dwells. The second type of person, however, has no remedy, since his eyes have been sealed so he cannot see the greatness of the Creator, blessed be He, and the way to serve Him. For he is righteous in his own eyes and so how can he return to God in repentance? For this reason when the Evil Inclination seduces man to sin, it makes it appear to him that he is actually performing a commandment, in order that he will never repent.… Even more than that, when he falls ill, it makes him imagine that he should pray to God that He should heal him from his sickness because of his study of Torah and the commandments which he has performed, not realizing that he is actually mentioning his sins. All this is the seduction of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*].

EVIL INCLINATION

Evil Inclination and the Shattering of the Vessels

'Likkutei Shas' (Sanhedrin 46a)

This explains how the Evil Inclination affects man.

You should know that the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] came into being from the Shells [*Kelippot*] of the broken vessels when they broke into two. The two parts they split into were Strict Justice [*Din*] and Compassion [*Rachamim*]. The elements of Strict Justice were holy laws, and were not yet called the Evil Inclination, for they were holy.... The Serpent desired Adam and Eve,[1] and the Shell of Strict Justice clothed itself in this Serpent. The Serpent did not want to approach Adam, the first man, for he would not be able to overcome him, so it went to Eve, who herself was from the side of Justice, having been made from the deep sleep that fell upon Adam from the taking of his rib, which is an actual symbol of the breaking of the vessels.

When the Serpent had sexual relations with Eve, she became an impure admixture[1] of the Evil Inclination. When Adam returned and had sexual relations with his wife, then he was stung with a painful thorn and the Evil Inclination entered him.

Shells (*Kelippot*) and the Evil Inclination (*Yetzer Hara*)

'Etz Chaim', shaar 50, anaf 6

The demons in the world are a reflection of the Evil Inclination in man.

You should know that just as in the sphere of holiness there are the human souls that are the inner core of the worlds and the souls of angels that are the outer part of the worlds, as is known. So in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is the Shell of Light [*Kelippat Nogah*], from its inner part emerge the souls of the Good Inclination [*Yetzer Hatov*] and of the Bad Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*], and from its outer core there emerge angels and demons [*shedin*] that are responsible for the activities of the world, for the stars and

for the constellations. So we find that those demons that are in this world are the external form of the demons who are known as the Evil Inclination of human beings.

Good and Evil Inclinations and Converts

'Etz Chaim', shaar 50, anaf 7

Angels and demons, forces of holiness and evil, are structured differently for different kinds of people.

You should know that in all worlds there are inner and outer aspects. Souls are from the inner dimension and angels are from the outer dimension.

The outer dimension itself is divided into two. The inner section of this external dimension contains the angels, who are called angels of peace, and because of their position they are attached to the souls of the righteous and receive them when they die.... The angels of the outer section[1] are called Erelim.... All of these are from the side of holiness.

Opposite them in the world of the Shells [*Kelippot*], there are also internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension itself is divided into two. The inner section, known as the Shell of Light [*Kelippat Nogah*], consists of the souls of converts. The outer section consists of the souls of Gentiles.

The external dimension is also divided into two. Its inner section consists of Jewish demons [*shedim yehudain*] and the outer section consists of Gentile demons. The soul of the righteous [*tzaddik*], the innermost part of Israel is, however, given a Good Inclination [*Yetzer Hatov*], which is an angel from the inner section of the external dimension of holiness, and an Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*], which is a demon from the inner section of the external dimension of the Shells. An ignorant Jew [*am ha-aretz*] is given a Good Inclination, which is an angel from the outer section of the external dimension of holiness, and an Evil Inclination, which is an external demon from the outer section of the external dimension of the Shells.

The souls of converts and of Gentiles all of them have an Evil Inclination and a Good Inclination from the demons of the world of

Shells.

The Lower and Higher Evil Inclination

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:72

For the mystic the consciousness of the greatness of God can overcome the Evil Inclination.

In truth for a person who has any clarity of mind this Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] is a great nonsense and madness. He does not need any self-control to overcome it. Even what ordinary people regard as a great temptation, for example the temptation of sexual lust, he regards as nonsense, and he does not regard it as a temptation at all. For a person who has any knowledge knows a little bit about the greatness of our Lord, the Creator, may His name be blessed.… It is impossible to explain this, either in writing or orally, for the greatness of God is only available to each person according to what he can grasp in his imagination.[1]… For the person who has the merit to grasp the greatness of God in his imagination, nothing is considered a temptation, and he does not need any self-control for this.

The *Yetzer Hara* in Future Times

'Yalkut Reuveni', Yetzer Tov, from 'Asarah Maamarot', Maamar Chikur Din 2:6, by Menachem Azariah de Fano

In the Messianic age the powers of evil will be overcome.

'And behold it was very good.'[2] This verse refers to… the Evil Inclination *[Yetzer Hara],* to [the Angel of] Death and to Purgatory *[Gehinnom]*. In future times the Evil Inclination will be purified and become a holy angel, and even Purgatory will be purified and will be attached to the border of the Garden of Eden.

Good Inclination, Evil Inclination and Man

'Pardes Rimonim' 31:3

The natures of the Good and Evil Inclinations are explained.

The Good and Evil Inclinations are two angels that accompany man, one on his right side and one on his left.… The Evil Inclination *[Yetzer Hara]* emerges with the soul just as the Good Inclination *[Yetzer Hatov]* emerges with it. For the Evil Inclination is from the side of Power *[Gevurah]* and it is a holy angel. Its vehicle is impure, however, and it enclothes itself with the power of impurity.… Its vehicle emerges from the four Shells *[Kelippot]* of impurity, which are sin, destruction, anger and wrath. It goes on the left side of a person riding on these four. The same is true of the Good Inclination which rides on a holy vehicle which is the power of [the angels] Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. It rides on these four on the right side of a person. A person can turn himself to either side. He has the ability to transform the side of guilt to the side of merit or, heaven forbid, the opposite.

Evil Inclination and the Parable of the Prostitute

'Zohar' 2:163a, Terumah

This explains how evil has a purpose for the promotion of good.

How can man love God with the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*], for the Evil Inclination opposes[1] man, in order to prevent him from serving the Holy One, blessed be He?… The answer is that this is indeed a greater service of God when the Evil Inclination is subdued by him. For the love which is expressed to the Holy One when the Evil Inclination is subdued,… that is truly love for the Holy One, since he knows how to offer up the Evil Inclination in the service of God.… It is the wish of the Holy One that mankind should always serve Him, and should walk in a true way. This is in order to enable man meriting much good.

Since this is the will of God, how can an evil servant[2] oppose the will of his Master, turning people on to a wicked way, thrusting them away from a good path, and making them not perform the will of their Master? The response must be that he is certainly doing the will of his Master.

It is like the parable of a king who had an only son whom he loved greatly. He commanded him, in affection, not to associate

with bad women, on the grounds that anyone who associates with them would not be fitting to come into the king's palace.

The son promised to fulfil his father's wishes devotedly. Outside the king's house was a prostitute, of beautiful appearance and comely figure. After a while the king said, 'I want to see what my son's attitude to me really is.' He called the prostitute and told her 'Go and seduce my son!'… She went to the king's son and began to hug him, to kiss him and to seduce him with all manner of seductions.

If the king's son is of worthy character, and obeys his father's commands, then he will rebuke her, not respond to her and push her away from him. Then the father will rejoice over his son, bring him into the innermost part of his palace, and give him presents, luxuries and great honour.

Who caused all this honour to the prince? Surely it was that prostitute. Should that prostitute be praised or not? Surely she should be praised for all aspects of her behaviour. For she obeyed the command of the king and caused the prince to receive all that good and all that love of the king towards him.

Self-Delusion and Spiritual Truth

'Kuntres Hahitpaalut', pp. 56ff., by Dov Baer of Lubavitch

Self-knowledge and truth are necessary conditions for the service of God, while self-delusion leads one away from it.

Every person, according to his intelligence, his knowledge, his heart, and according to his practice in the inner service of God from his youth, will recognize and find his place and his level and will distinguish in his soul all the elements of the faults which he has fallen into. If there are people whose souls are whole and whose hearts are truly focused on God, they should continuously pay close attention, with the eye of the intellect, to their own nature so that they do not deceive themselves.

For it appears that the main part of the diminution of the light of Torah and inner service of God[1] is only the errors which each one deludes himself about. This is true also for those who seek and desire the nearness of God, and it comes about because of the

weakness of the effort to seek out God to the full extent with all their heart.

People want to draw near to God from a distance, while their heart is not really in it.…

The essential part is to focus one's heart properly on the very truth of the subject of the words of the living God. To this goal he should focus his soul and heart all the days of his life of vanity. For why should he make his soul act in futile and lying ways, to distance himself and not to draw near [to God], heaven forbid? As the Yiddish saying goes, 'We should not fool ourselves.' As is known and acknowledged by everyone, the main part of the intermingling of good and evil is when a person fools himself.

All this of course applies to those who seek out, search for and desire the nearness of God in truth. This, however, is not the case with the majority of our followers, so it is essential to approach them with an open rebuke, with both hidden and open love, to reveal and inform each one about his defects and misery. Even if his soul cries secretly and he truly suffers, nevertheless, pride and his love of self cover everything to the point that he does not see any guilt for himself, and all the ways of men are pure and straightforward in his eyes. For this there is no hope. Indeed, in truth, apart from the self-delusion, which is only from the lack of knowledge, this cause is not the main thing. Rather it is from a weakness of heart in involvement with, and one's desire for, the words of the living God.

ORIGINAL SIN

Adam's Sin

'Midrash Talpiyot', anaf Adam Harishon, from 'Yalkut Shimoni', Job, ch. 37, section 922

This view that each person is responsible for their own deeds represents a polemic against Christian views on Original Sin.

The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam all the future

generations. He wrote them down in Adam's book, as it is written, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam.'[1] God said to Adam: See the reason that you have brought death on the righteous.

When Adam heard this he began to be troubled. He said to God, Master of the Universe, have you done such a thing in your world? What does it matter to me if the wicked die, but the righteous will have a complaint against me.… Please do not write down that it was I who brought death on them.

The Holy One said, I will indeed do that.

When Adam came to depart from the world, the Holy One revealed Himself to him and said to him, Write down those deeds that you have done and also that you are dying because of your deeds.

He wrote and signed. In future times when the Holy One comes to judge His creatures, He will bring all the books of the sons of Adam and show them their deeds. That is why it is written, 'By the hand of each man it is signed.'[2]

[The editor of Midrash Talpiyot (p. 54) says:]

When Adam said: I am greatly troubled by the death of the righteous, lest they complain against me', he meant that though it is true that death had to come into the world, they will complain against me that since I was directly created by the hands of the Holy One, why should [death] be drawn down by my agency and not by someone else.

Original Sin and the Soul

'Zohar' 3:61b, Acharei Mot, and 'Chesed Le-Avraham' 4:34

Even before birth souls choose their acceptance or rejection of God.

All souls of humans, before they descend into the mundane world, are engraved before God in the firmament in the very same form that they will have in this world.

All that they will learn in this world they already know before they come down to the world. This applies to the truly righteous. Those who will not be found righteous in this world, even there,[1] are distanced from the Holy One, blessed be He, and enter the Hole

of the Great Abyss [*nukba di-tehoma rabba*].[2] They precipitate matters and make an early descent into the mundane world.

We have learnt that such souls are arrogant in this world, just as they were arrogant before they were born into the world. They reject that holy portion which was given to them; they go, wander and defile themselves in the Hole of the Great Abyss. From there they take their portion, and descend prematurely into this world. If they are meritorious later on and repent before their Master, they can then take their original portion once again.

[Commentary by Chesed Le-avraham:]

Concerning the sin of the soul before it comes into the world.[3] Since it [the soul] has no Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] there,[4] how can the terms 'sin' and 'transgression' be justified? Similarly, how can the soul distance itself from the face of the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] and be drawn after the Shell [*Kelippah*] that surrounds the Garden of Eden?… All these are indeed our sins in this mundane world, when a person leaves his holy father and mother and cleaves to his wife of harlotry.

One can respond as follows. All emanated souls do not descend directly to this lowly world after they have stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and have involved themselves with Torah study, according to their abilities, in that world.

They are not permitted to descend to this lowly world until they are given permission by their Creator. These souls are attracted to the external forces, that is they rebel against their Master and want to come [into the world] before their time and precipitate matters. Those external forces that rebel seek to mislead [the soul], saying that they will draw it below and feed it from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, so [the soul] is drawn after the Shells and material things and after this physical world, which it [the soul] desires. The whole of their sin there is in precipitating matters in order to descend into this world before they are ripe, before the conclusion of their conditional existence, the end of their service to God and their Torah study above.

When they are born their behaviour below is just like their behaviour above. Therefore, they can only come [fully into this world] through acts of merit and similar things, because they are in the midst of the Shells that have no place to give to a soul except in

their own portion, in a place of evil, bastards [*mamzerim*] or children of a menstruant woman [*niddah*] [places] which have an aspect of impurity in them. These [places] are mostly evil. Thus it is in the power of the Creator to influence a soul there as reflected in the verse, 'And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.'[1] These were from the skin of the serpent, a body which was foul and impure.

REPENTANCE

Repenting for Repentance

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:6:3

The primary way back to God is through repentance, yet that itself needs to be transcended.

One needs always to hold firmly to the quality of repentance, for who can say, 'My heart is pure, I have cleansed myself of my sins.'[2] For even when a person says, 'I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have done wrong', it is impossible to say this with a completely pure heart, without any ulterior motives. So we find that one needs to repent for the initial repentance, that is for the declaration, 'I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have done wrong.' Concerning this it is said: 'With his lips he does honour Me', since it is through repentance that one merits the honour of God, 'but he has removed his heart far from Me'.[1]

Even if a person knows about himself that he has repented fully, he still has, nevertheless, to repent for the initial repentance, because when he first repented he did so according to his level of spiritual understanding. When he has already repented, he will certainly have a greater understanding and comprehension of God, may He be blessed. So we find that, according to the spiritual understanding he now has, the initial level of spiritual understanding he had was very mundane and physical. Thus he has to repent for that initial spiritual understanding, for having conceived of the high level of the divine in mundane terms. This is an aspect of the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*] which will be entirely

one of Sabbatical[2] rest, that is entirely one of repentance. As it is written, 'And you shall return to the Lord your God.'[3] For the main part of the World to Come is the spiritual understanding of the divine. As it is written, 'And they shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them.'[4] Thus we find that every time one has a grander spiritual understanding of God, then one has to repent for the previous level of spiritual understanding.

Sin, Repentance and Ascent

'Likkutei Moharan' 1:22:11

Sin can have positive consequences since only it can lead to repentance. So to sin is a descent in order to ascend thereafter.

When one wishes to move on from a level of doing and understanding [*naaseh ve-nishma*][1] to a higher level of doing and understanding, there has to be a descent before an ascent. For descent is for the purpose of ascent. As our Sages, their memory be for a blessing, said, 'It was not becoming for David to do what he did nor was it becoming for Israel to do what they did. But God, may He be blessed, put an obstacle before them for the good of the world… to teach repentance.'[2]…

For when understanding becomes action, this leads to a higher level of understanding. This is impossible unless one falters. For to ascend from level to level, there has to be a descent first, and this is an obstacle. It is referred to in the verse: 'In those days and at that time, says the Lord, the sin of Israel will be sought and there shall be none.'[3] For in a future age there will only be repentance, and through repentance intentional sins are transformed into merits,[4] and Torah is created from the sins of Israel. Therefore, the sins will be sought, for then people will seek out and search for the sins of Israel, how one can take one further sin in order to make Torah out of it. It says, 'there shall be none', for all the sins will be incorporated in the Nothingness, that is the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*]. There sins are transformed into merits by repentance. This is thus an aspect of descent in order to ascend.

SHELLS

Holiness and the Evil Shell *(Kelippah)*

'Pri Etz Chaim', Purim 5

The Shells have no life of their own and are parasitic on holiness.

There is a spark of holiness in each Shell *[Kelippah]* which gives it life, and if it were removed from it, then the Shell would be completely nullified.

The Power of the Shells and the Animal Wisdom

'Shaar Ruach Hakodesh' 6

Nature, even in its lowest form, can reveal divine teaching in response to the dominion of evil.

Know that from the day that the Torah was burnt by the nations of the world,[1] through our great sins, its power and its secrets have been given over to the hand of the Shells *[Kelippot]*. Therefore, there is no creature in the world, even among the unclean creatures, such as cattle, wild beasts, birds, reptiles and insects, that will not impart some wise thing. He who understands their noises and their chirping will be able to know a number of the secrets of the Torah. There are generations in which there are righteous people who are able to discern them.[2]

Souls Are Trapped by the Shells

'Sefer Hagilgulim' 32

Reincarnated souls can be redeemed from the power of evil by the good deeds of others.

Sometimes souls are strongly entrapped in the depth of the Shells *[Kelippot]*. They are unable to free themselves[1] from there until a certain person, who is from the same soul root, arrives and

performs a good deed *[mitzvah],* which relates to what is necessary to rectify *[tikkun]* the defect in a particular soul.

Heathen Women Trapped by Shells

'Shaar Hamitzvot', Tetze

Converts in general are regarded as lost Israelite souls, here exemplified by the beautiful woman captive.

> When you go out to war against your enemy and the Lord your God delivers him into your hand and you take captives as prisoners, then if you see among the prisoners a beautiful woman, and you desire her and would take her for yourself as a wife…[2]

When a man meets a heathen woman,[3] then he may desire her with overwhelming desire, although behold he might be truly righteous. This is an indication that the [woman's] soul is oppressed among the Shells *[Kelippot].* Therefore, it is permitted for him to have sexual relations with her, for she is not impure for him to couple with… It is better for him to take her, to convert her to Judaism and to return her to her [soul's] root. That is why Scripture says, 'When you go out to battle against your enemy and the Lord your God delivers him into your hand.' This indicates that you are indeed truly righteous, for it is God who has delivered him into your hands, and it was not through your own power, your sword or your bow. So when you see a beautiful woman among the prisoners, you should know that she is a pure, holy soul who is oppressed and taken captive by the Shells.… You can bring back an imprisoned soul from them.

SIN

Sin and Learning Kabbalah

'Chesed Le-avraham' 2:30

Torah study and prayers have power over sins, and even more so the

study of Kabbalah.

You should know that every scholar who expounds *aggadah* has the power to forgive all the sins of Israel. If he adds to this the *Kaddish* said after *aggadah,* then all his own sins are forgiven, and even if an evil decree has been sealed against him, the Holy One, blessed be He, will forgive him and atone for his sins. Similarly if someone hears an exposition from a Sage who is wise in the Kabbalah, which is itself called *aggadah,* then all his sins are forgiven him.

Sin Can Be the Will of God

'Mei Hashiloach' 1:54a, Pinchas

The antinomian elements in Kabbalah are here expressed in the belief that certain kinds of sin are an expression of God's will.

'When Phinheas the son of Aaron the priest saw it,… he took [a spear… and thrust it through both of them].'[1] One should not think that Zimri was an adulterer, heaven forbid, because the Holy One, blessed be He, would not devote a section of the Torah to an adulterer. There is, however, a secret mystery in this matter. For there are ten aspects to sexual immorality. The first level is someone who makes himself alluring and intentionally goes to commit a sin. That person draws the Evil Inclination *[Yetzer Hara]* to him. After this there are nine other levels [of sexual sin], and at each level a person's power of free choice is lessened,[2] and he cannot entirely avoid the sin. Until at the tenth level a person tries to distance himself from the Evil Inclination and to guard himself against sinning with all his strength, to the point where he is not able to defend himself any more than this. Then, when his Inclination overcomes him, he performs the sinful deed. This certainly is the will of God, may He be blessed.

Just as in the case of Judah and Tamar,[1] where she was his destined partner, so here also it was the same. For Zimri, in truth, guarded himself against all evil desires. At the end, however, he thought that she [Cozbi] must indeed be his destined partner because he did not have the strength to keep himself back from this deed. Phinehas thought the opposite, namely that he [Zimri] still had the strength to resist this.[2]… We find that Phinehas in this issue

was like a child, in that he did not perceive the depth of the matter. He relied only on the perspective[3] of the human intellect and nothing more.

Sins Are Also from God

'Tzidkat Hatzaddik' 40

That sins come from God compared to free will and divine foreknowledge.

The essence of repentance is to bring a person to a point where God will illuminate his eyes, so that his sins will be like benefits. This means to say that he will recognize and understand that all his transgressions were also the will of God, may He be blessed.… This is like the reason behind the [paradox] of divine foreknowledge and free will as explained by Rabbi Isaac Luria.[4]… He claimed that both were true, each one in its own separate location. In the location of human free will there is no divine foreknowledge, and in the location of divine foreknowledge there is indeed no place for free will. When a person reaches this great insight,[1] then all his transgressions without exception will return because of the depth of the divine foreknowledge. For God, may He be blessed, His knowledge and His will are all one.

Since God willed it, behold, they are all meritorious deeds and a person merits a complete atonement.

On the Day of Atonement this is the secret meaning of the goat sent out to Azazel.[2]

For if a person did this of his own accord, it would be an act of genuine idolatry, which should not be performed. This is the foundation of all the negative commandments and all the transgressions and departures from the will of God. The goat, however, is sent by the will of God who has commanded it, so it is a good deed [*mitzvah*] not a transgression. This is how our Sages have explained it and so has Nachmanides,[3] namely that we give a portion to Azazel, who represents evil, since God has commanded [us] to give it to him. Thus we find that a sin is actually a good deed.

The Power to Sin Comes from God

'Tzidkat Hatzaddik' 100

Recognition that all activity is from God applies, ultimately, to sin itself.

Repentance [*teshuvah*] is returning something back to God, may He be blessed. That is to say a person recognizes that everything is activated by God and His power, even a thought before it is formed in the heart of a person, as our Sages say.[4]

We find that God, may He be blessed, has then given power to him also in his sin. Through this, after complete repentance, he warrants that his sins become merits, for this was also the will of God.… This is why the Sages say about the verse in the Book of Psalms, 'Let Your pious ones shout for joy', that this refers to the wicked ones of Israel.[1]

… The explanation is that a pious person turns aside from the letter of the law to act piously, and similarly, a wicked person turns aside from the letter of the law to act wickedly. When God opens up [the Garden of Eden] in future times after complete repentance and everyone recognizes the power of His kingdom, then we will find that the transgressions, which were a turning aside from the letter of the law, were pious acts since they were not a turning away from the truth of God's will.…

Only with God they are called pious people, but they do not appear so in the eyes of human beings.

God Is the Agent Even for Sin

'Tzidkat Hatzaddik' 179

Knowing that God is behind all things can even affect sins themselves.

> You should know Him in all your ways, and He will straighten your paths.[2]

This is explained in the Midrash Shocher Tov[3] to mean that one should know that in every matter it is not the person who is the agent, rather it is God, may He be blessed… For the Holy One

dwells in the midst of the Children of Israel, and He is one with the Community of Israel,[4] and they are not something separate from Him at all. Our Sages say, 'You should know Him in all your ways… even for the purpose of sin.'[1] That is when a person goes to sin he should bear in mind[2] that the strength that he has to go and rebel against the will of God, also comes from God Himself. For without it from where would one have any strength at all? Through this thought the power of his Evil Inclination will be weakened.… Also if you actually sin God will straighten your paths… when you fulfil the commandment, 'You should know him'.… Even though you have sinned and turned aside from the correct road, if now you fulfil the commandment to 'know him', being aware that this [the sin] is also from God, then He will straighten your path.

Forbidden to One May Be Allowed to Another

'Mei Hashiloach' 1:43b, Behar

Judging the actions of another is problematic, because only God can truly understand his situation.

'A person should not oppress his fellow, and you shall fear your God.'[3] This verse applies even to great souls, of a high level, when they see a person doing something that is not according to the will of God, may He be blessed, and they want to accuse him and punish him. Therefore, the Holy One warns that they 'should not oppress'. … Since a person has a duty to love his fellow, as we are commanded, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself',[4] a person needs to seek compassion for his fellow, while [actually] he wants to accuse him.… For if God wishes to examine the deeds even of the righteous, they would not be innocent[5] in his eyes.

Before God who can be justified and who can say, 'My heart has merit.' Despite all this God is silent and does not reveal the shame of any person even though he has sinned.… A person who brings accusations against the deeds of his fellow may appear in his own eyes as if he were purified, in line with the divine will. It may also seem that it is the will of God to accuse a person who sins, therefore, he accuses him.

… [Instead] God upbraids him, for His holy will is only to hide

all the sins of Israel, as it is written, 'You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.'[1] That is He will hide them with great concealment so that they will not be revealed or seen any more.

So how can a person say that God, may He be blessed, desires to find a person guilty and to emphasize his sin. It is true that God has commanded a person to reprimand his fellow and keep him away from all evil to the best of his ability. Yet this only applies in a place where he knows he will be able to remove him from this successfully, or through prayer when he seeks to awaken [divine] compassion for him so that he returns to the good path. If, however, he is not able to detach him [from this sin], then he needs to see him in a positive light[2] and not to accuse him. For a person cannot judge his fellow as guilty, since it is possible that the Evil Inclination of his fellow is greater than his own Evil Inclination, or perhaps this thing[3] [which he did] is actually allowed for him. There are many things which are forbidden to one man and yet allowed to another man.

Temptation

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p.72

While the Evil Inclination, as a representative of the powers of evil, is regarded as a force to be reckoned with, for some Kabbalists it was a mode of consciousness and, with the right mindset, ultimately an illusion.

The Lubliner, when he was young, used to go to Rebbe Elimelekh of Lyzhansk.[1] It once happened that on the way there was rain and great cold, and he got lost at night and saw a house in a wood that was lit up. He entered it and inside it was warm and beautiful, and this revived his spirits which had suffered greatly from the rain and the cold. In the house there was only a good-looking woman. He did not know what to do because he did not wish to be alone [*yichud*][2] with her. She wanted to seduce him to sin, may the Merciful One save us, and said that she was unmarried and ritually pure. He was greatly pained and troubled by her attempts at seduction, and he replied to her that he had decided never to do anything, even if it were permissible, unless 'it produces pleasure and joy of spirit to my Creator, and what kind of joy of spirit could

God have from this?' When he replied thus, immediately he saw that it was all an illusion in order to test him, and there was no wood, nor a house, nor a woman, and he found himself standing by the road that he was travelling on.

SPARKS OF HOLINESS

Soul at Birth and Sparks of Holiness

'Etz Chaim', shaar 50, anaf 3

Each soul, according to the Lurianic Kabbalah, has sparks of holiness which is its task to elevate back to their source in the Godhead.

When a person is born, behold, his vital soul [*nefesh*] needs to separate out [*berur*] those sparks [*nitzozot*] that have reached his portion, which had fallen from it through the sin of Adam, the first man, in the Shell of Light [*Kelippat Nogah*]. For this is the purpose of the birth of a person in this world. It is through the commandments [*mitzvot*] that those portions which have become blemished and have fallen there are separated out. You should already know, however, that the vital soul does not come naked into a person. Rather it exists in the form, known as *tzelem,*[1] which is present at the time that a person is created.

For the matter is as follows. It is the father and the mother who bring down that soul from above. Now according to the merits of the man and the woman, and the commandments they have performed, they draw down a vital soul for the embryo which relates to the commandments. They are thus like the root of its soul. They also cause the separation of a few sparks from the Shell of Light, through their actions, making a garment for that soul.

Sparks of Holiness and Shells of Evil

'Mevo Shearim' shaar 7 section 2, ch. 1, by Chaim Vital

The Shells of the power of evil surround the holy sparks within each thing. Holiness provides life force for the Shells, as does the sin of man.

There is nothing in the world, in all the worlds, and also in all parts of the World of Action *[Asiyah]* - mineral, vegetable, animal and language based forms of life - which does not have sparks of holiness located inside the Shells *[Kelippot]* that need to be separated out. It is necessary to extricate all the holiness within them, with only the dross, that is the Shells, remaining without any mixture of holiness at all, even a hairsbreadth. Then the Scriptural verse would apply: 'He swallows up death forever', and all wickedness will disappear like smoke.[2] For then the dross, which remains inside the broken vessels, will be left without any life. They [the Shells] will be completely dead, and nullified. That is not the case now, when the sparks of holiness which are located inside them give life to them. This is the powerful mystery of the desire and craving of the Shells to lead man astray, and thus to give themselves life.

Sparks of Holiness Everywhere

'Tzevaat Haribash', Hanhagot Yesharot

There is a spark of holiness in sin, which is repentance itself. This can either mean that sin allows repentance to take place, or that repentance is the means for raising the sparks out of sin.

A great principle is that in everything in the world there are Holy Sparks. There is nothing which is empty of Sparks, including wood and stones, and including all the deeds which a man performs. Even the sins which he commits have Sparks from the breaking [of the vessels]. What kind of Spark is in sin? It is repentance. At the time that a person repents for a sin, he elevates the Sparks that were in it to the upper world. This is indicated by the Scriptural expression [that God] 'lifts up sin'.[1] The explanation of this expression is that God lifts sin and raises it upwards. This is also the explanation of the verse, 'my sin is too great to lift up',[2] namely to raise it up and elevate it to the upper world.

DEMONS
ASMODEUS

Asmodeus' Advice on Purification

'Zohar' 2:128 a, Terumah

Magical texts can generate moral imperatives, since demons specifically are aware of how to avoid evil.

It is written in the book of magic, that Asmodeus taught to King Solomon, that anyone who wishes to try to remove the spirit of impurity from himself, and to subdue the alien spirit,[1] has to undertake [a great] effort and pay a full price. He needs to give all that is asked of him, whether a little or a lot. This is because the spirit of impurity is always freely available at no cost, and can be bought without payment. It forces people to allow it to rest upon them and seduces them with many seductions, so it can dwell in them. It has many ways to pervert people so that it can establish its habitation with them.

The Holy Spirit is not like this. It takes a full payment, and great and mighty effort, self-purification and purification of its dwelling place, and a longing of the heart and soul, so that perhaps one can do good to it and it will establish its habitation with one. Together with all that, one has to walk in a straightforward way, not turning to the right or left, otherwise it may depart immediately, and distance itself, so that one is unable to provide benefit to it as before.

Asmodeus and Magic

'Zohar' 3:194b, Balak

It is not always apparent from the magical practices found in Kabbalistic works how much is actual practice and how much a symbolic language for mystical practices.

It is found in the book of Asmodeus, which he gave to King Solomon, that everyone who wishes to perform strong acts of hidden magic, if he knows the rock where Balaam fell,[2] he will find there snakes which have been formed out of the bones of that wicked person. If he kills one of these snakes, he can work high levels of magic from its head, other forms of magic from its body

and yet other forms of magic from its tail. Each one has three forms of magic in it.

Asmodeus and Black Magic

'Zohar' 3:43a, Tazriya

The antagonism to magic is based on the view, expressed here, that black magic is the abandonment of God in order to serve another master.

In the book of magic spells of Asmodeus, we find that one who wants to perform [black] magic of the left side,[1] and to attach himself to it, should rise by lamplight or where his shadows can be seen,[2] and recite the incantations fixed for these magic acts. He should call out to the dimensions of impurity using their impure names. He should invite his own shadows[3] to come to those he has invoked, and say that he has prepared them according to his will to obey their commands. That person will thus move out from the control of his [divine] Master and give this control to the side of impurity.

Through these magic incantations which he has recited, and by inviting [the powers] to his shadows, two spirits, which adopt the forms of his shadows in the shape of men, can be seen. They inform him how to cause harm and how to do good at different times. These two spirits, which were not originally given any bodily form, are now embodied in these shadows. They are incorporated in them and inform him of things that can cause harm. Thus, he has moved away from the dominion of his [divine] Master, and has handed over [the human soul] given as a pledge from God to the left-hand side of impurity.

DEMONOLOGY

Demons and Their Use

'Zohar' 1:47b–48a, Bereshit

Demons are a danger to mankind because, as spirits without bodies, they

crave the kind of wholeness which humans have.

The time the demons were created was just as the Sabbath began, and they were left as spirit without body.[1] These are creatures which were not finished; they are from the Left Side, the dross of gold. Because they are not whole and remain defective, the Holy Name [of God] does not rest upon them, nor do they cleave to it. They are in great terror of the Holy Name, and they quake and are frightened before it.[2]

The Holy Name does not rest on a defective place… for the Holy Name is perfect on every side, and no defect can ever attach itself to it.

Come and see. Those creatures are defective both above and below, and therefore, they do not cleave either above or below.… If you ask why they were not at least finished off above, seeing that they are spirits? The answer is that since they were not finished below on the earth, they were, therefore, not properly finished above. They all originate from the Left Side, are invisible to human beings and confront people to do them mischief.… After these spirits were created, they were hidden behind the millstones of the Hole of the Great Abyss during the night and the day of Sabbath.

When the holiness of the day had ended, and they were still unfinished, they emerged into the world and spread out in all directions. The world itself needs to be protected from them, because then the whole of the Left Side is aroused and the fire of Purgatory *[Gehinnom]* blazes. All the inhabitants of the Left Side spread out into the world, seeking to clothe themselves in bodies, yet they are not able to do so. That is why we need protection against them, and therefore, they [the Sages] have prescribed the recital of a song against demon spirits,[1] whenever the fear of them abounds in the world.

Demon Children

'Zohar' 1:54b, Bereshit

Humans and demons have sexual relations and produce demon children.

Said Rabbi Isaac,… From the time that Cain killed Abel, Adam

separated from his wife. Two female spirits would come and have sexual intercourse with him, and he bore spirits and demons [from them] that spread out around the world. This need not seem surprising, because when a person dreams, female spirits come and stimulate him sexually, and are aroused by him, so they subsequently give birth. The creatures thus produced are called 'the plague children of Adam';[2] they can transform themselves only in appearance as human beings, but they have no hair on their heads. … Similarly male spirits visit women of the world and make them pregnant, so that they give birth to spirits which are also 'plague children of Adam'.

From Demons to Angels

'Zohar' *3:277a-b,* Ki Tetze Reiya Mehemna

Souls can become subordinate to the Evil Inclination, but can also be redeemed from this state and transformed from the demonic to the angelic.

In the Secrets of the Torah there is the following parable. There are souls which are at the level of matrons. There are souls which are at the level of maidservants,… and there are souls at the level of simple slave girls.[1] The same is true of humans.

Thus, [for example] there are people who are female slaves with regard to their souls. Sometimes it happens that a soul transmigrates according to the secret of Reincarnation [*gilgula*],… and the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] pursues the soul to make it enter into a body, which is a female slave to the Evil Inclination. Such a person is a Jewish demon [*shed*], and his soul,… is known as a Hebrew handmaid. Through her the demonic within a person may be transformed into an aspect of the divine name [*Sha-dai*][2] if the person guards that soul, repents through her, blesses God each day…, sanctifies God with the affirmation, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts',[3] and unifies God through her with the recitation of the *Shema*. Thus what was a demon is transformed into an angel, an aspect of Metatron, becoming the divine name *Sha-dai* which has the same numerical value as Metatron.[4]… If the person does not repent then he will become enslaved through the sins which he has committed.

… This inner demon… is transformed from a demon to an angel and from an angel to a demon, depending on the deeds of a person.

It is through such demons that come from this[5] that the Masters of the Mishnah have established that there are among them ministering angels, Sages who know past and future things; in their earthly form they are masters of philosophy and the astrologers of Israel, who know what has been and what will be. From the signs of the sun and the moon, from eclipses and all stars and constellations, they are aware of what will appear in the world. There are also from among them [these demons], people who are like animals. They multiply and increase like animals. In their earthly form they are ignorant peasants [*amei ha-aretz*], and the Masters of the Mishnah have established that they are abominable and their children are like reptiles. Concerning their daughters it is said, 'Cursed be those that have sexual relations with any animal.'[1] They hate the Sages, the Masters of the Mishnah, for the latter are literally ministering angels.…

There is yet another group who are masters of the secrets of the Torah, masters of ethical qualities [*middot*], who inherit souls from the holy *Sefirah* of Kingship [*Malkhut*], in which all the ten *Sefirot* are incorporated.

Demon Kings

'Chesed Le-avraham' 7:14

The mythological language of the Kabbalah about the powers of evil is apparent here.

The holy sages of the Kabbalah say that they have a tradition handed down from their fathers that the atmosphere may be divided into three parts: the upper, the middle and the lower. The upper part is given to Asmodeus, the great King of the Demons [*Shedim*], and he does not have permission to accuse people or to hurt people except on Mondays.

Even though Asmodeus is known as the great King of the Demons, he is under the rule of Samael, and he [Asmodeus] is called the Great Prince in relation to the lower emanation.

Asmodeus is under his hand and dominion. Samael is in sexual

relationship with Lilith Senior [*savta*],[2] while Asmodeus is in sexual relationship with Lilith the younger.

Each one of these two groups [of demons], with their partners, was born with their mate as two-sided[1] hermaphrodites, just like Adam and Eve. Lilith the young maid, bride of Asmodeus, is the daughter of the [demon] king whose name is Kftzfoni.[2]… The early sages have said that there is jealousy between Samael, the Grand King, the Great Prince, and Asmodeus, King of the Demons, concerning Lilith, who is called the young maiden Lilith. She is in the form of a beautiful woman from her head to her navel, but from her navel below she is burning fire. For the daughter is like her mother, who is Mhitbl, the wife of Kftzfoni, the mother of Lilith the young maiden. Both of them, mother and daughter, are caught up in their battle with the greater Lilith, the wife of Samael.

LILITH

Lilith and Naamah

Zohar 3:76b–77a, Acharei Mot

The threat from female evil spirits to children, and their sexual congress with humans, is discussed.

Rabbi Jose said: From the time that death was decreed for Adam and for all mankind, he said: Why should I give birth to children for their destruction? Immediately he separated from his wife. Two female spirits used to come to Adam to have sex with him and give birth from him. The offspring produced were demons, who damage the world and are called ‘the plague children of men’. They fly around humans and rest in doorways, pits and toilets. That is why these demons avoid humans who have as a heavenly adornment the holy name *SHA-DAI* on their doorposts.[3] Scripture says, ‘And plagues will not draw near to your tent.’[4] What are these plagues which do not draw near? They are the ‘plague children of men’. We have learnt that when man came down to earth in the heavenly likeness, the holy likeness,[1] then all who saw him, both higher and lower beings, came near to him and appointed him king of this

world. After the serpent had sexual relations with Eve, and infected her with filth, she gave birth to Cain, and from there all the wicked generations of the world are descended. From that side the domain of spirits and demons is to be found. Therefore, all spirits and demons have half of the nature of human beings below and half of the nature of the angels above.…

We find one male came into the world from the spirit of the side of Cain, and they called him Tubal Cain. A female emerged with him, called Naamah, who leads creatures astray. From her other spirits and demons issued forth. These hover in the air and pass on information to those others who are found below. This Tubal Cain produced weapons of war in the world, and Naamah was very excitable and clung to her own side. She still exists and her dwelling place is among the surging waves of the great sea. She goes out and teases men, becoming sexually aroused from them in their dreams through human lust, and attaches herself to them. She takes that lust alone and from that lust she becomes pregnant. She thus gives birth to different kinds of beings in the world. The male children that she bears from humans present themselves [in dreams] to human females who become pregnant from them and give birth to spirits. They [these children] all go to the original Lilith who brings them up.

She [Lilith] comes forward into the world and seeks out little children. When she sees little human children, she attaches herself to them in order to kill them, and to draw out their infant spirits. While she goes along with this [child's] spirit, three holy angels[2] appear there, fly before her, take the child's spirit from her and place it before the Holy One, blessed be He. There the child is instructed. This is why the Torah warns people, 'You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy.'[1] It is certainly true that if someone is holy he need not fear her. For then the Holy One, blessed be He, will summon up the three holy angels, and they will guard that child so that she cannot hurt him.… But if someone is not holy, and draws a spirit from the unclean side *[Sitra Achra]* upon himself, she comes and plays with that child, and if she kills him, she draws out his spirit and never leaves it.

Sometimes it happens that Naamah goes forth to become sexually aroused with men and a man is sexually linked with her in lust, and then he awakes from his sleep, and unites with his wife and has sex

with her, while his desire is still inspired by the lust that came to him in his dream. Thus the son that is born comes from the side of Naamah, because it was through lust for her that he came about. When Lilith goes out and sees the child, knowing what has happened, she becomes attached to him. She brings him up like the other children of Naamah, and she is with him frequently, and she does not kill him.

Demons: Mortal and Immortal

'Zohar' 1:55a, Bereshit

More on the sexual temptation of female demons.

Rabbi Chiya said: Why does it say in the Bible, 'The sister of Tubal Cain was Naamah.'[2] Why does Scripture specifically mention Naamah here by name? The reason is that men are seduced by her, as are spirits and demons. Rabbi Isaac said: The angels[3] Uzza and Azael went astray after her. Rabbi Simeon said: She was the mother of demons and emerged from the side of Cain. She combines with Lilith to bring diphtheria *[askara]* on children. Rabbi Abba said to him: Didn't the master say that she was appointed to engage in titillation of men? He replied to him: That is certainly true. For she comes to men and titillates them. Sometimes she gives birth to demons in the world from them. To this day she still exists to titillate men. Rabbi Abba asked him: Surely demons die just as humans do? So how can she continue to exist until now? He replied to him: That is indeed the case but Lilith, Naamah and Agrat the daughter of Machalat,[1] who all emerge from that side [*Sitra Achra*], they will all go on existing until the Holy One, may He be blessed, removes the spirit of impurity from the world, as it is written, 'I will take away the spirit of impurity from the earth.'[2] Rabbi Simeon said: Woe unto those humans who do not realize, pay attention to or see things. They are all thickheaded and do not know that the world is full of strange creatures that cannot be seen, and full of hidden things. If permission were given for the eyes to see, people would be amazed how they could exist in the world. Come and see. Naamah is the mother of demons, and from her side come all the demons that titillate men, they take the spirit of lust from them and sport with them so that they have a nocturnal emission of semen.

Because these nocturnal emissions come from the side of the spirit of impurity, a man needs to bathe [afterwards] in order to purify himself.

The Threat to Adam and Eve from Lilith

'Zohar' 3:19a, Vayikra

Men and women in sexual relationship need protection from Lilith, who represents a danger to them.

Come and see. From within the depth of the upper Great Abyss there is to be found one female, a spirit above all spirits, whose name is Lilith. She was Adam's original partner. At the time that Adam was created, and his physical body was completed, a thousand spirits from the Left Side gathered round his body. This one wanted to enter him, and another one wanted to enter him, though they were not able to do this, until the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked them. Adam was lying as a body without a spirit, green in appearance, and all these spirits surrounded him. At that moment a cloud descended and drove away these spirits. It is written that at that time, 'God said let the earth bring forth a living soul',[1] and we have it established that the divine female [*Sefirah Malkhut*] was impregnated by the divine male [*Sefirah Tiferet*], bearing that soul of Adam. She brought forth the spirit to breathe into man, made up of two sides,[2] as is fitting.

That is what Scripture says: 'And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.'[3]… When Adam arose his female part was attached to his side, and the holy soul that was in him spread across both sides. It was sufficient for both since it was inclusive of all.[4] After that the Holy One, blessed be He, cut Adam in two, beautified his female side,… and brought her to Adam in a perfected form like a bride to the wedding canopy. When Lilith saw this she ran away, and she lives by the shores of the sea. Unto today she is ready to injure humans. When the Holy One will destroy the wicked Rome in the future, and it will become a permanent ruin, then Lilith will arise and dwell in those ruins. For she brings ruin on the world.

As Scripture says, 'For Lilith will repose there and find rest for

herself.'[5] It is said in ancient texts that Lilith abandoned Adam before this, but we have not learnt it this way, because this female was indeed in partnership with him. As long as the [other] female [Eve] was not prepared for him in a fitting way, Lilith was his sexual partner.

When the [other] female was indeed prepared for him in a fitting way, Lilith ran away to the sea and was ready to injure humans. The remedy against this is that at the time a man has sexual relations with his wife, he should focus his heart on the holiness of his Master and recite the following:

> She who is wrapped in a sheet is present. Fly away, fly away, do not come in or take anything away, for they are not yours, nor are they your servants.[1] Return, return, the sea is tempestuous, the waves are calling you. I am holding on to the holy portion, I am wrapped in the holiness of the King.

Then he should cover his head and that of his wife for an hour or so. This should be done each time [they have intercourse] for up to three days, so that the semen is absorbed [by the woman]. For any combining of seed where it is not absorbed within three days, will not then be taken up. In the book that Asmodeus left for King Solomon it says, however, that this should be for thirty days, and it says there that after having sexual relations one should sprinkle clear water around one's bed, and this will act as a protection against everything. A woman who is suckling an infant should not have sexual relations with her husband except when the child is asleep.

After having sexual relations she should wait an hour before breastfeeding again, the time it takes to walk about two miles, or the time to walk one mile if she is not able [to delay] because the child is uncomfortable and is crying. Thus she need not fear her [Lilith] at all.

Happy are those righteous ones whom the Holy One, blessed be He, teaches deep secrets, both celestial and mundane, all of them because of the Torah. For anyone who engages in Torah is crowned with the crowns of the holy [divine] name. For the Torah itself is the holy name, and anyone who engages in it is marked and crowned with the holy name. Thus he knows hidden ways and deep secrets both in heaven and on earth, and never has any fear.

[The commentary 'Derekh Emet' (ascribed to Isaac Luria) explains:]

He should whisper a spell against the evil Lilith to drive her away from the bed at the time of sexual union with his wife.

For she always seeks to be there at the time of sexual relations in order to be able to hold on to the child brought into being by this intercourse.

Therefore, it is necessary to recite the spell to drive her away. Behold, every spiritual thing clothes itself in a different physical form before it reveals itself to perform any act. For while it is spiritual it is unable to act in the world of the senses. Each spiritual being will clothe itself according to its own nature, just like an angel who comes to reveal himself to a prophet. The same is true of negative spirits; when they come to associate with humans, they clothe themselves with physical clothing. Since Lilith clothes herself with physical clothing, her garment is thought of as a linen sheet, thus the spell refers to her as 'the one wrapped in a sheet, and prepared to attach herself to the sexual act between a man and his wife, fly away, fly away, do not come in etc.… for the waves of the sea are calling you…' The rest of the spell is self-explanatory and it is a received tradition that she flees to the islands of the sea through this spell.

SAMAEL

Not to Mention the Name 'Samael'

'Shaar Hakavvanot', Derushei Tefilot Arvit, derush 1, by Chaim Vital

Names have power, and saying the names of demons may inadvertently conjure up the demons themselves.

A person has to be very careful not to mention, with his own mouth, the name of Samael, and this is the secret meaning of the verse, 'You shall not mention the names of other gods.'[1] This is specially true at night for that is the time of Samael's control and

dominion. Not only that but it is also forbidden to mention similar matters, for instance those people who have the custom of saying in the vernacular 'the devil'[1] and other analogous things. One should not mention them at all because demons are in one's environs, and their power is enhanced when one mentions them.

One time I was with some people at night and in the middle of my discussion with them, I mentioned the name of Samael. After that in the morning, I [Rabbi Vital] went to the house of my teacher [Rabbi Luria], may his memory be for a blessing. He gazed at me and said to me:

> Last night you transgressed the prohibition against mentioning the names of other gods. One should be careful all one's life not to mention him, neither by his name nor by similar expressions. This is specially true at night, when he is given the authority to overpower you and those around you if you mention his name.

Samael and Demons

'Zohar' 1:28b-29a, Bereshit

Evil has many aspects, even among the Israelites, representing a hierarchy from Samael, the Serpent, down.

There are a number of evil admixtures making up the composition [of Israel], which are like animals and wild beasts. There are admixtures coming from the side of the Serpent and admixtures coming from heathen nations, which are like wild beasts and the creatures of the field. Mixed up with Israel there are also those who come from the domain of destructive spirits, and these are the souls of the wicked. They are real destructive spirits in the world. There is also an intermixture of demons *[shedim],* evil spirits and female liliths,[2] all mixed up with Israel. None of them, however, is as cursed as Amalek,[1] the evil serpent, an alien god. He is the source of all the sexual immorality in the world and of murder. His mate is the deadly poison of idolatry. All of them are really Samael. Yet there are different aspects of Samael which are not all equal, but the dimension of the serpent is more cursed than all of them.

Samael Is the Evil Inclination *(Yetzer Hara)*

'Zohar' 2:4ib-42a, Bo Reiya Mehemna

This identifies the Good Inclination with the angel Gabriel and the Evil Inclination with Samael.

An ignorant man needs… to be redeemed from the control of the Evil Inclination *[Yetzer Hara],* which is his master.… In this world it is the master because of the many sins of the body… The average person is both a brother of the Evil Inclination and a brother of the Good Inclination.… When a person's merits are great,… he returns to become master [over all creatures].…

When the merits are of an average amount, then… the merits and the demerits struggle in a warlike manner.… A person who descends into the side of demerits forgets all his Torah. Before a person comes into this world and leaves his mother's womb, A man wrestles with him.'[2] That is the angel Gabriel,… who is the Good Inclination and teaches him seventy languages, while the Evil Inclination struggles with him,… and makes him forget the seventy languages which the Good Inclination taught him.…

Before all of this, if he has the merit of the fathers, four angels descend with him, as it says concerning them, 'For He commands His angels to guard you in all your ways.'[3] The first is Michael, through the merit of Abraham; the second is Gabriel, through the merit of Isaac; the third who descends with him is Nuriel, through the merit of Jacob; and the fourth is Raphael, through the merit of Adam, the first man. The Good Inclination is above all of them.

If the person does not have merit, a different four descend with him: Sin, Destruction, Anger and Wrath. The Evil Inclination is above them to judge him in the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*]. Because of this we have learnt that 'A wicked person is judged by the Evil Inclination, a righteous person is judged by the Good Inclination and the average man is judged by both.'[1] Thus if he is an average person Gabriel, who is the Good Inclination, and Samael, who is the Evil Inclination, both judge him.

Samael and the Halls of Impurity

‘Chesed Le-avraham’ 2:56

On the side of good and of evil, there are levels of purity and impurity. Only at the highest level of good is one free of Samael, and only at the lowest level of evil is one beyond the power of redemption.

Know that we have a tradition of the Kabbalah from our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, that fifty Halls of Purity were created in the World of Formation [*Yetzirah*], in the Hall of Love where the camp of Michael’s angels, known as the Ofanim, is situated. Opposite them fifty Halls of Impurity were created in the World of the Hall of Substitutions [*Temurot*],[2] which is called the World of Samael, who rules over them… It is known that a person is not judged in the heavenly court [*Bet Din shel Ma’alah*] except from the age of twenty-one onwards.[3] A person who enters the first day of his twenty-first year will be able to choose what is good and to reject what is evil. If he tries to be involved with Torah and the commandments [*mitzvot*], then on that first night when he sleeps on his bed, Michael, the great angelic prince, sends one of the important angels of his camp, as is appropriate for the person. [This angel] brings his soul and takes it in through the door of the gate of the first hall of the fifty Halls of Purity, and brings it in as far as the soul merits. This is the case each night, and the soul is brought deeper in, according to the measure of the person’s efforts in Torah and the commandments. If he merits reaching the fiftieth hall, then he becomes free of Samael and need have no more fear of him. As long as he has not merited entering the fiftieth hall, however, even though he has entered the forty-ninth hall, as yet it is possible for the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*] to overcome him. This is because of his free choice, so that he can regret his earlier undertakings. It could thus remove him from the forty-nine Halls of Purity and bring him into the Halls of Impurity.

Similarly, a person who, on the first day of his twenty-first year, begins to reject good and to choose evil will leave righteous ways and walk in ways of darkness. Then as he sleeps on his bed, Samael sends an important member of his camp, as is appropriate to the level of the sinning soul. This demon leads him to the Halls of Impurity and brings him in the door of the gate of the first hall, according to the measure of his sins and transgressions. If he has sinned greatly then he is brought in further, until he enters the

fiftieth hall and then he has no further cure for his condition.…

This is the nature of the Halls of Impurity and of Purity. For as long as someone has not entered the fiftieth Hall of Impurity, even though he has entered the forty-ninth hall, he still has the power in his choice to reject his earlier undertakings. He can break down the doors of bronze, cut off the iron hinges, leave the forty-nine Halls of Impurity and enter the Halls of Purity. This is the secret meaning of… the idea that even the most wicked of Israel, though they have performed much wickedness, will not enter the fiftieth Hall of Impurity until they sin and transgress continuously for four hundred days, one after the other.

Samael and the Public Domain

'Zohar' 3:243b, Pinchas Reiya Mehemna

The Sabbath laws prohibit the carrying of objects from the private domain of homes into the street, which is the public domain. Here this law is given a Kabbalistic interpretation in terms of Samael and the public domain of illicit sexual relations.

> And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant.[1]

It is necessary to keep it in their dwelling places.[2] Not to go out from the private domain to the public domain.… This [public domain] is Samael and the Serpent [Lilith], and Israel must guard against them, so that they should not enter the dwelling place of the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*], which is the private domain. What is this public domain? It is that of the woman of profaned priestly descent, slave girl, harlot, menstrual woman and heathen woman. It is the domain of Samael and the Serpent, and the seventy guardian angels of the nations.

God's Vengeance on Samael

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 22, p. 78a

The battle between God and the powers of evil will culminate in the victory of holiness.

> For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as hard as Nether World [*Sheol*].[3]

At the time that Israel keeps the commandments [*mitzvot*] of the Torah through love, the verse states 'jealousy is as hard as the Nether World'. The Holy One, blessed be He, reacts jealously against Samael and his female consort. For they cause people to die for their sins, and they cause people to sin. Because of this in future times the Holy One will take vengeance against them and remove them from the world. For the female consort of Samael is death. She is Lilith, the Angel of Death.[1] The Evil Inclination *[Yetzer Hara]* of the female consort is with males and the Evil Inclination of the male [Samael] is with females.

Samael and the Tree

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 21, p. 60a-b

Here is an example of how a biblical story about the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden is interpreted by the Kabbalah as a symbolic reflection of the conflict between good and evil.

Some of the commandments *[mitzvot]* are associated with the fruit of the tree; some of them with the branches; some of them with the roots; and some of them with the tree itself.[2] Because of this the Torah is called the Tree of Life.[3] It is written concerning anyone who eats from it, 'He shall eat and live forever.'[4] There is also a lower tree, whose branches, roots, trunk and fruit are all the venom of death. This is Samael. Anyone who transgresses the Torah drinks from [the sap of] this tree and is sustained from it. Concerning him it is said, 'For on the day you eat from it you shall surely die.'[5] From the aspect [of this tree] comes a life of suffering.

Samael and the Sabbath

'Zohar' 3:243a, Pinchas Reiya Mehemna

The power of evil is temporarily overcome by holy time, and will be permanently overcome in the Messianic Age.

On Sabbaths and festivals Samael and the Serpent [Lilith], and all their powers, have no dominion, and neither does Purgatory [*Gehinnom*], which symbolizes the evil female consort of Samael and its forces. All of them are hidden away in the face of the king's armies. Just as the idolatrous nations will hide away when the Messiah will be revealed.

SATAN

Satan as God's Test for Man

'Toldot Yaakov Yosef', Vayakhel

Evil is necessary as a means for people to serve God truly.

I have heard a parable that there was a king who ruled over many countries, some near and some far. In the end he wanted to find out the extent to which his subjects truly served him so he sent one of his servants in disguise, as if he were a rival king who wished to wage war on the real king. There were those citizens who supported the war against him. There were others who said, Why should we fight, for we are servants of whoever is truly king? Until he [the disguised servant] came to a country where there were great sages, and they investigated the matter. They understood that it was impossible to accept it all literally, for several reasons, and they understood that the 'rival king' was certainly an agent of the real king who had come to test people to see if they would rebel against the king. So they went out to meet him and told him these things. He was pleased about their wisdom, and went on his way. The parable is easily understood. This is what the Zohar[1] has already referred to namely that the Evil Inclination is like a prostitute that the king commanded to seduce his son, etc.

THE SERPENT

The Battle with Evil Inclination

'Tikkunei Zohar', Tikkun 13, p. 29b

A call to arms in the battle with the powers of evil. The reward for overcoming the Serpent is prayer itself, the relationship with God.

Higher beings, prepare yourself and energize yourself with the weapons of war against the Serpent [Lilith],[1] whose lair is in the great mountains. It is he who killed Adam, the first man, and all generations that came after him. Because of this a heavenly proclamation goes out every day which declares that whoever kills this Serpent, whose lair is in the mountains, will be given the Daughter of the King, which is prayer.

CHAPTER 12
REDEMPTION

MESSIAH

Sufferings and Wars in the Age of the Messiah

'Zohar' 2:7b, Shemot

In this vision of the end of days, at the dawning of the Messianic Age, there will be suffering and wars, till the Messiah is revealed.

Rabbi Simeon raised his hands and cried. He said, Woe to the person who will be alive at that time. Yet how happy is the portion of the person who finds himself alive at that time.

Woe to the person who will be alive at that time, since when the Holy One, blessed be He, comes to visit the 'Young Deer' [*Shekhinah*], He will see who it is that stands by Her at that time, and [will examine] the deeds of each one who is found with Her. He will not find them worthy. As the verse says, 'I looked but there was no one to help.'[1] Many afflictions and troubles will befall Israel.

Yet how happy is the portion of the person who finds himself alive then, if he is found faithful at that time. For he will merit the light of the joy of the King. Concerning that time it is written, 'I will refine them, as silver is refined, and will evaluate them as gold is evaluated, etc.'[2] After that sufferings will overtake Israel.

All nations and their kings will band together against her, awakening a number of evil decrees, and they will join together in one counsel against her. Then trouble will be heaped on trouble, and the latter ones will make preceding troubles forgotten.

Then a pillar of fire will appear reaching from heaven to earth for forty days, and it will be seen by all nations. The Messiah will awaken and emerge from the Garden of Eden… He will awaken in the land of Galilee, and on that day when he goes out, the whole

world shall be overtaken by anger, and all the children of men will hide in caves and among the rocks, thinking that they will not be saved.…

The Messiah… when he will arise, will reveal himself in the land of Galilee; because this part of the Holy Land was the first to be destroyed.[1] Therefore, he will reveal himself there first, and from there battles will be initiated against the whole world. After the forty days, during which time the pillar will have stood between heaven and earth before the eyes of the whole world, the Messiah will reveal himself.

One star, burning with all colours, will come from the East, and seven other stars will surround it. They will make war on it from all sides, three times a day for seventy days, before the eyes of the whole world.… After the seventy days the one star will be hidden away, and the Messiah will also be hidden away for twelve months. The pillar of fire will return as before, and the Messiah will be hidden within it, although the pillar will not be visible. After twelve months the Messiah will be taken up to heaven in that pillar, and there he will receive dominion and the royal crown. When he descends, the pillar of fire will again be visible to the eyes of the world. After that the Messiah will reveal himself, many nations will gather to him and he will engage in war against all the world. At that time the Holy One will stir up His power for all the nations of the earth, and the Messiah will be known throughout the whole world.

Secrets of the Torah Revealed in the Messianic Age

‘Zohar’ 3:153a, Behaalotecha Reiya Mehemna

For the mystics the real Torah is its underlying secret message. The study of Torah without its mysteries is here depicted as bitter waters which in the age of the Messiah will once again be transformed and become sweet water.

There is a spiritual message hinted at in the idea that water can be made sweet. This is found in the verse, ‘and the Lord showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet’.[1] From this we can see that a person who is engaged in Torah, which

is a tree,[2] the Holy One, blessed be He, pardons their sins… They thus become sweet.

A day will come[3] when the ideas of the Exodus will be established again for them [the Israelites].… In that last exile it will not be death but poverty which will apply, for extreme poverty is like death.… Just as then [in the wilderness], He made for them 'a statute and justice',[4] referring to the masters of the Mishnah, so here also they will come to the bitter waters, when the Oral Torah will become bitter for them, because of the pressure they are under and because of their poverty. The Scriptural verse, 'They embittered their lives [with hard work, with mortar, with bricks and with all manner of service in the field; in all their service they made them serve with rigour]',[5] will apply to them. The 'hard work' refers to the questions asked [in Rabbinic texts]; the 'mortar' refers to the logical derivation of one thing from another;[6] 'bricks' refers to the clarification of the Law;[1] 'all manner of service in the field' refers to extraneous texts [*beraita*];[2] 'in all their service they made them serve with rigour' refers to unresolved disagreements [*teku*].

The Faithful Shepherd[3] will be established among you… and with that Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is what is forbidden and allowed. With those secrets which will be revealed through you, the 'waters will be sweetened',… all those questions and disagreements which are the bitter waters of the Oral Torah will once again become the sweet waters of Torah. Your sufferings will be sweetened for you through those secrets revealed through you. All the pressures on you will pass like a dream.

The Messiah and the Freeing of Trapped Sparks

'Shaar Hagilgulim', Introduction 15

Responsibility for the dawning of the Messianic Age rests on mankind, and particularly on the People of Israel. Their good deeds hasten, while their sins delay, the destruction of the power of the evil Shells, the release of trapped souls and the return of the Divine Presence from Her exile.

When the Temple was destroyed, the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] was exiled among the Shells [*Kelippot*]. The reason was because the

souls that were exiled there did not have the power and the ability to extricate themselves, since they had been defiled by their sins. Therefore, His Divine Presence, may He be blessed, about which it is said, 'For the Lord your God is a consuming fire',[1] enters among them to gather up the sparks of the souls which are there.

She[2] separates them out [*berur*] and raises them to a place of holiness. She renews them and brings them down into this world in human bodies. Thus can you understand well the mystery of the exile of the Divine Presence.[3] From the day that the Temple was destroyed, this is God's work, until the task of gathering up all the souls that have fallen among the Shells of Adam Belial, and become intermixed with him from his head to his feet, is completed. The Messiah will not be revealed, and Israel will not be redeemed, until He finishes gathering up even those who have fallen to the level of the feet.[4]…

The Divine Presence can only gather them up, however, through the activities of those here below, and through their prayers. This is the mystical meaning of the verse, 'Give strength to God.[5] According to the measure of the deeds of people here below, so is the measure of the removal of those souls and sparks. If all of Israel were to repent, with perfect repentance, there would be power in His Divine Presence to remove all the souls from there in one moment. Our sins, however, weaken Her power, as Scripture says, 'You have weakened the Rock that bore you.'[6]

When the escape of all the souls has been completed, then His Divine Presence will also leave there [exile]. The life force will disappear so that the Shells will die, and evil will be consumed in smoke. This is the mystical meaning of the verse, 'I will swallow up death forever, etc.'[7] This means that because of the departure of His Divine Presence and of all the sparks of the souls which were among them, the Shells, which are called 'death', will perish and be swallowed up in one moment.

The Messiah Is above Time

'Likkutei Moharan' 2:61

The issue of why the Messiah delays his coming, with such a long period of suffering and hope, is dealt with here in terms of the nature of time

itself.

Even though for us, according to our mind, it appears that a span of time lasts seventy years, for a greater mind such a span is only a quarter of an hour. So it is as one ascends upwards, for a mind that is still greater at an upper level, even this time span for a mind greater than our mind is only considered by a greater mind as of smaller and lesser duration. So it is as one ascends until one reaches a mind so high where all time has no duration. For because that mind is so great, all time is completely nothing and naught, just as the seventy years that pass for us within our dreams are really a quarter of an hour. Similarly, there is a mind above mind where time is nullified completely.

At the end God will say to the Messiah, who has experienced what he has experienced, since the world was created, and has suffered what he has suffered, 'You are my son, I have given birth to you today.'[1] This seems at first glance a most wonderful and amazing thing. All of this, however, is because of the great level of the spiritual intellect of the Messiah, according to the exalted level to which he is attached.… Therefore, all time which has passed over him from the day of the creation of the world to that instance is completely like naught and nothing.

The Delay in the Coming of the Messiah

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 70

The delay provides an opportunity for backsliding Israelites to become worthy of redemption.

It is explained in Kabbalistic texts that the reason why the days of our exile are so long is so that no one should be banished. If redemption had come before, then there would have been many souls of Israel which would have fallen away and been banished. As we have heard that our teacher the Maggid of Koznitz[1] said that God is able to bring Redemption but there would be many outcast, heaven forbid. I have also heard… that there was in the days of Rebbe Israel Baal Shem Tov, a righteous man who wanted to bring the Redemption through awakening mighty powers and judgements against the wicked. Rebbe Israel, may his merit protect us, asked

him what powers would he use to save the People of Israel from these mighty powers and judgements so that they should not affect them?

Because otherwise many from Israel would be banished and would fall away, heaven forbid. Because this righteous man forgot about saving Israel, he was punished from heaven.

Redemption in the Messianic Age

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 70

A popular description of the stages of redemption.

Rabbi Acha said: The Temple will in future be built before the Kingdom of the House of David.… The order of things is that the Messiah will reveal himself, and there will be wars, and the enemies will be cut off, and there will be the war of Gog and Magog. After that the Messiah will hide himself, Israel will be purified in poverty, and in suffering in the wilderness of the Gentiles. Then the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem will descend from above. After that the Messiah will reveal himself and cut off Gog and Magog completely.[2] 'Then I [God] will transform the people with a pure language',[3] all of them speaking the holy tongue and serving one God. Then the dead in the Holy Land will come back to life. Those dead that arise will bring back to life the dead in the Diaspora [outside of the Land of Israel], their relatives and loved ones as they wish.

The Messianic Age and the Third Temple

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 71

The Third Temple, which will descend from heaven in the Messianic Age, is built there by the deeds of Israel here on earth.

We have received a tradition from our Rabbis that every individual Israelite purifies and builds part of the Temple. Our master Rebbe Elimelekh, may his merit protect us, made a soul ascension to heaven and they showed him that he had built, through his holiness, the altar in the Temple in heaven. He asked about the

situation on earth and about the Holy of Holies sanctuary [the most sacred part of the Temple]. They replied to him that if he wished to purify this aspect, then the Messiah would come, and this would be through the merit of the study of Torah for its own sake in holiness and in unification.

The Messiah Loves the Wicked

'Midrash Pinchas He-Chadash', opening page, by Phinehas Shapira of Koretz

This radical teaching of love and acceptance in the Messianic Age is from the early days of the Chasidic Movement.

The Messiah will defend the merits of all Israel, even claiming that wicked ones are righteous, for they too have right on their side. Because of the merit that he finds for them they will repent and through this they will be redeemed. A minor righteous man loves minor wicked people, and a great righteous man loves very wicked people. The Messiah, however, loves even those who are completely wicked and defends their merits. Everyone who defends the merit of all of God's creatures thus has an aspect of the Messiah.

Individual and General Redemption in the Messianic Age

'Teshuot Chen', Va-era, by Gedaliah ben Isaac of Linitz

The general redemption of the Messianic Age depends upon each individual working out his own salvation.

The Baal Shem Tov said concerning the verse, 'Draw redemption near to my soul',[1] that this is a prayer for the individual redemption of one's soul from the exile of the Evil Inclination [*Yetzer Hara*]. When everyone has achieved an individual redemption, then after that there will be a general redemption, and the Messiah will come speedily in our days, Amen. From small to great everyone will know God and do everything only for the sake of His name, may He be

blessed.

The Letter of the Besht and the Messiah

'Ben Porat Yosef', concluding section, by Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye

This letter, written after 1750, is one of the few authentic texts composed by Israel Baal Shem Tov (the Besht). It was given to his disciple Jacob Joseph Katz of Polonnoye to deliver to the Besht's brother-in-law Abraham Gershon of Kutow (d. c. *1760), who was in Palestine. But Rabbi Jacob never travelled to the Holy Land, and he published the letter at the end of 'Ben Porat Yosef'.*

On the New Year festival [*Rosh Hashanah*] in the year 5507,[2] I performed an act of magical soul ascension,[3] as is known to you. I saw wonderful things in a vision that I had never seen till now, from the day that my mind matured.[4] What I saw and I learnt when I ascended there, it is impossible to tell and to speak of, even on a one-to-one personal basis.[5] When I returned to the lower Garden of Eden *[Gan Eden],* however, I saw innumerable souls of the living and of the dead, both who were known to me and not known to me. They were moving hither and thither,[1] ascending from world to world through that central column known to the mystics, with great and extensive joy which the mouth would be exhausted in relating and for the physical ear too difficult to hear.[2] Also many wicked people repented and their sins were forgiven them. For this was a great time of divine goodwill.[3]

I was amazed also that so many were accepted in repentance, for you also knew them. There was great and exceeding joy among them and they also ascended in a similar way. All of them together sought me, and pressurized me very much, saying: 'Because of the high level of your Torah, God has favoured you with extra understanding to grasp and know about these matters. You should ascend with us to be an aid and a support for us.' Because of the great joy which I saw among them, I said that I would ascend with them.

I saw in a vision that Samael had gone up to accuse people in this great joy, the like of which has never been before. He undertook his

activities, with decrees of apostasy against a number of souls who would be killed in strange ways.[4] I was seized with trembling and actually took my life in my hands.[5] I requested of my master and teacher[6] that he should go with me, for there is a great danger to go and ascend to the upper worlds. For from the day that I reached my current level,[7] I had never ascended to such great heights as this. I ascended level after level until I entered the hall of the Messiah where the Messiah studies Torah with the Mishnaic Sages, with the Righteous and also with the Seven Shepherds.[1]

There I saw very great joy but I did not know what the reason was for it. I first of all thought that this joy was, heaven forbid, because I had died.[2] They told me afterwards that I was not yet dead, for they took pleasure above when I performed unifications[3] below through their holy Torah. I do not know the nature of this joy, however, to this day.

I asked the Messiah, 'When will the master come?' He replied to me:

> Through this you will know. At the time that your manner of study, those things which I have taught you and which you have grasped yourself, will become well known and revealed in the world, and your wellsprings will spread forth outside.[4] So that others will also be able to perform unifications and soul ascensions just like you. Then all the Shells [*Kelippot*] will cease and it will be a time of divine goodwill and salvation.

I was amazed by this and was greatly pained by the extensive length of time before this could possibly be.

What I learnt from him there, however, were three techniques [*segulot*] of practical Kabbalah and three holy names,[5] which are easy to learn and to explain. I calmed down and thought that perhaps through this my colleagues[6] would come to the same level and condition as I. That is they would be able to perform soul ascensions, learn[1] and return as I do. I was not given permission all the days of my life, however, to reveal this. I sought permission for you, so that I could teach you, but no permission at all was granted me. I am under oath about this.

This I can inform you, however, and may God help you to direct your way towards God and not go astray. Specifically, in the Holy Land at the time of your prayers and study and every word that you utter, you should have the intention of unifying God.

For in every single letter there are worlds, souls and divinity, and they ascend, join together and unite with each other. After that letters join together and unify and become a word and unify themselves into a true unification in the divine. You should include your soul with them in every aspect of the above. All the worlds will unite together as one and ascend. Great joy and pleasure without measure is caused.

The Besht's Letter and Redemption

'Derekh Emunah Umaaseh Rav', p. 36

The Besht's letter was highly regarded.

I have heard… that the letter that Rebbe Israel Baal Shem Tov sent to the Holy Land to his brother Rabbi Gershon of Kutow, may his memory be for a blessing, and which is printed at the end of the book *Porat Yosef*, that it was felt to be a duty… to study it each day without fail, actually like the putting on of phylacteries [*tefillin*]…. The three divine names that he [Rebbe Tov] refers to having learnt in that letter, although he does not state explicitly what they were, they are in truth hinted at in the letter in a hidden manner. Through them it is possible to know the end time of the Redemption.

Messianic Revelation of God Who Hides in the World

'Tanya-Likkutei Amarim' 36, by Shneur Zalman of Lyady

The Messianic Age is the culmination of the Creation of the world. Here the idea of the revelation of the light of God, which will take place in that age, is explained.

There is a well-known teaching of our Sages that the purpose of the creation of this world was because the Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have a dwelling place in the lower world. Nevertheless, it is not relevant to talk about 'above' or 'below' with regard to God, for He fills all worlds equally. The explanation of the matter, however, is that before the world was created He was One all alone,

filling all the space in which He created the universe. It is also the same now for Him, the only difference is with regard to those who receive His life force and light. For they receive these through the many garments which cover and hide His light, as it is written, 'For no man shall see Me and live.'[1] Our Sages have commented on this that even angels… cannot see Him.

This is the idea of the evolution of the worlds, and their descent from level to level through the many garments that hide the light and the life force which come from Him, until this physical and material world itself was created. This world is the lowest level, and there is nothing lower than it with regard to the hiding of His light. [Here] there is also a multiplicity[2] of darkness, to the point that this world is full of [the powers of] the Shells [*Kelippot*] and of the Other Side [*Sitra Achra*], which oppose God… Behold the goal of the evolution of the worlds, and their descent from level to level, was not for the sake of the upper worlds, since for them this represented a descent from the light of His countenance. Rather the purpose was [the emergence of] this lower world, for God willed it since there is pleasure for Him when the Other Side is transformed and darkness is turned to light; so that the divine light of the Infinite Godhead [*Ein Sof*] should illuminate the place of darkness and Other Side throughout this world, in a most thorough manner. So that the excess of light, overcoming darkness, is more than His illumination of the upper worlds, where He shines through garments and through hiding His face. These hide and conceal the light of the Infinite Godhead, so that they should not be nullified in their existence.

For this reason God gave the Torah, which is called 'power' and 'strength', to Israel. As our Sages have taught, the Holy One gives power to the righteous, so they can receive their reward in future times, without their existence being nullified through the light of God, which will be revealed in the future without any garments.… As it is written, 'The sun will no longer be for you as your light in the daytime… rather the Lord will be an eternal light for you.'[1]

It is known that the Messianic Age, and especially the Resurrection of the Dead, are the real purpose and culmination of the creation of this world, for which it was originally created. An aspect of this [Messianic condition] already existed at the time of the giving of the Torah as it is written,… 'And all the people saw

the sounds.'[2] They saw what was normally heard. Our Sages have explained this as follows. They looked to the East and heard the word [of God] emerging, 'I am the Lord.' The same was true in each of the four directions of the compass, above and below,… there was no place from which He did not speak to them. That is because the revelation of His will in the Ten Commandments, which incorporates the whole of the Torah, is an expression of the inner nature of His will and wisdom, so there is no hiding of His face at all.…

Therefore, they [the Israelites at Mt Sinai] were completely nullified in their existence. This is what our Sages have taught that at every word their souls expired, etc., but the Holy One returned their souls to them with the dew which in future will revive the dead.[3] This is the dew of Torah which is known as 'power'… Only after that sin[1] had its effect and they, and the world, became grossly material. [This condition will last] until the time of the end of days, when the physical nature of the human body, and the world, will be purified. They will then be able to accept the revelation of the light of God that will illuminate Israel through the Torah which is called 'power'. From the excess of illumination of Israel, the darkness of the Gentiles will also be lit up. As it is written, 'The nations will walk by your light.'[2]

RESURRECTION

The Body at the Resurrection

'Kedushat Levi', Va-Etchanan, by Levi Isaac of Berditchev

The doctrine of the Resurrection of the body in the Messianic Age raises issues of how people would arise in bodily form. Here an early Chasidic master gives a spiritual interpretation.

It is known that there is a dispute between the Kabbalists and those who investigate divine things philosophically, concerning a person who has reincarnated many times. In which body will he be renewed [at the Resurrection]? The view of the Kabbalists is that it will be his original body, while the view of the philosophers is that

it will be his last body. My view is a compromise one. For behold it is known that the 248 positive commandments are in parallel to the 248 organs of the body, and the 365 negative commandments are in parallel to the 365 bodily sinews. Each organ is parallel to a particular commandment.… Therefore at the Resurrection, at the time that God will gather up all the exiles of Israel, then each and every one of Israel will be perfect in the structure of his body and soul with an ultimate perfection. That is he will be fitting to enter the king's palace without any organs missing at all. For they will have gathered together all their perfected organs, that is each organ that has been rectified, and perfected and healed in each and every reincarnation. From those organs which have been rectified and healed in all the reincarnations, from each particular reincarnation, the particular organ that is rectified by it will be purified and gathered together to build his body, until his body is perfect with an ultimate perfection from all those perfected and rectified organs through all of the reincarnations, without anything lacking at all.

WORLD TO COME

Death and the Family in the World to Come

'Zohar' 1:218a, Vayechi

The images seen by a dying person are an indication of the immanence of death itself.

Rabbi Simeon said to Rabbi Isaac:[1] Have you seen the image of your father today or not? For we have learnt that at the time that a person leaves this world his father and relatives are found there with him, he sees them and recognizes them. Also all those with whom he has shared a dwelling, on the same level, in this world all gather together and are found with him to accompany his soul to the place where it will rest. He replied: As yet I have not seen him.

The World to Come and the Sabbath

'Chesed Le-avraham' 1:5

A utopian vision of the World to Come in the Messianic Age, when a new world order will dawn and physical limitations will be removed.

The divine guidance of the world [on the Sabbath] is in two modes. One was operative at the time that the Temple was in existence on Sabbaths and New Moons. The second is in the future when the world will be in a complete state of Sabbath.

In the time of the Temple, although the unification[1] at a supernal level was diminished by the divine taking on the physicality of the World of Action [*Asiyah*] the levels of holiness were unable to endure the fine, sweet light [of God] because of their materiality. They were, however, able to receive it in a refined form in the mystery of their souls by the addition of an extra soul, and this helped to increase their benefit.

In a world which will be in a complete state of Sabbath, Israel will be stripped of their materiality and will ascend beyond the level of an angel. They will all dwell in the sweet light. Then this will be both a spiritual and a physical rest, and each person will be attached to his brother and not be separated. This is the mystery of the World to Come [*Olam Ha-ba*].

Now, however, we receive a little of the light of this rest on the Sabbath, through the body and material nature, and a little through the vital soul [*nefesh*], a little more through the spirit [*ruach*] and a little more through the higher soul [*neshamah*]. This is because they are clothed in materiality, a partition which divides [man and God]. Even though they are not in Exile, nevertheless it was the sin of Adam, the first man, which caused the Shell [*Kelippah*] to encompass the vital soul, through its being clothed in a body, this dead flesh, this ugly dust. What was once pure and clean is now enclothed in the Shell of the skin of the Serpent. Inevitably this will act as a partition which divides.

Also for this reason the light and rest is lessened in this Babylonian exile.[2] From this we can learn about how much the good levels would add after the body is completely stripped from its ugliness and exile. The world will then be rectified and will be highly elevated, and everything will be established at the resurrection of the dead.

Prayer for Peace

‘Sefer Likkutei Tefillot’ 2:53, by Nathan of Nemirov

May it be Your will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, to cleanse the world of wars and bloodshed, and let a great and wonderful peace extend throughout the planet. Let nation not lift up sword against nation, and let them learn war no more.[1]

Only let all the dwellers on earth recognize and know the very truth, that we did not come into this world for argument and quarrels, heaven forbid, nor for hatred, jealousy, disputes and bloodshed, heaven forbid. Rather we came into the world to recognize and know You, may You be blessed for all eternity…. So let the Scriptural verse be fulfilled… ‘And I will bring peace into the land, and you will lie down with no one to make you afraid. And I will remove wild beasts from the land, and neither shall the sword pass through your land.’[2]

Glossary and Select Biographies

ACADEMY ON HIGH *see* **HEAVENLY ACADEMY**

ADAM BELIAL ('Evil Man') The Evil Cosmic Man, shaped out of the ***SEFIROT*** of the ***SITRA ACHRA*** in contrast to the holy **ADAM KADMON**, 'Primordial Cosmic Man'. Adam Belial, identified with **SAMAEL**, the Prince of Darkness, was brought into being by the sin of Adam, the first man.

ADAMKADMON ('Primordial Cosmic Man') The form of a cosmic man fashioned out of the divine lights at the beginning of the process of emanation.

AGGADAH ('story'; plural **AGGADOT**) Those parts of Rabbinic literature containing homiletic expositions of the Bible, stories, legends, folklore and maxims.

AM HA-ARETZ ('people of the land', 'peasant'; plural ***AMEI HA-ARETZ***) Term of derision used about ignorant people.

AMORA (literally 'spokesman'; plural **AMORAIM**) Aramaic term used of Rabbinic figures of the Talmudic period, from the mid third century to the beginning of the sixth century CE, referring to the practice of having a 'spokesman' repeat a lecture aloud in the Talmudic academies.

ARAMAIC A Semitic language spoken throughout the Middle East, in different dialects, till eclipsed by Arabic after the seventh century CE. Talmudic and Zoharic literature are mostly in Aramaic, as are two biblical books (Daniel and Ezra) and sections of the Jewish liturgy. Aramaic is known in Jewish literature as *Targum*, 'translation', because of the ancient Aramaic translations of the Bible. The Aramaic language was identified by Kabbalists as the language of the evil powers of the ***SITRA ACHRA***.

ARI *see* **HA-ARI**

Ashkenazi, Isaac Luria *see* **Luria, Isaac**

ASHKENAZIM (singular **ASHKENAZI**) Jews with cultural origins in European Christian countries. The common language of Ashkenazim in pre-modern times was Yiddish, a Jewish dialect of German. Today they differ in many ritual aspects from **SEPHARDI** Jews. *See also* **RASHI**.

Ashlag, Yehudah Leb Halevi (1886–1955). Lurianic Kabbalist and author, who studied with a hidden Kabbalistic master in his native Poland and moved to the Land of Israel at the age of 34. There he began teaching Kabbalah while composing the *Sulam*, a translation and commentary on the Zohar. He also published widely on Lurianic texts.

ASIYAH ('Action') The lowest of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (***ATZILUT***, ***BERIAH***, ***YETZIRAH*** and ***ASIYAH***), which represent a hierarchy of the different dimensions through which ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, emanates the finite, mundane world. *Asiyah* is the world of human activity.

ATZILUT ('Emanation') The highest of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (***ATZILUT***, ***BERIAH***, ***YETZIRAH*** and ***ASIYAH***), which represent a hierarchy of the different dimensions through which ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, emanates the finite, mundane world. For Kabbalists the world has come into being through a process of emanation, which is a mysterious emerging of reality from the Godhead, hence the name of the highest of the four worlds.

AVODAH ('service') The service of God, which was expressed in Temple times in the sacrifices, and subsequently in prayer and in religious rituals.

AYIN ('Ultimate Nothing') The Godhead, ***EIN SOF***, about which nothing can be said. Sometimes *ayin* is also applied to the highest ***SEFIRAH***, closest to ***EIN SOF***, known as **KETER**, the 'Crown'.

Azulai, Abraham (1570–1643), Morocco. Kabbalist who migrated to the Land of Israel where he came under the influence of Vital's

version of Lurianic Kabbalah. He is reputed to have discovered, together with a fellow Kabbalist, Jacob **Tzemach**, unpublished Lurianic manuscripts buried in the tomb of Chaim **Vital**. His *Chesed Le-avraham* became a very popular exposition of Kabbalistic ideas.

Azulai, Chaim Joseph David (1724–1806), Jerusalem. Kabbalist and bibliographer, who travelled widely, collecting money to support the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, and met with many of the greatest scholars of his generation on his travels. Azulai reported their teachings in his works as well as recording the rare books and manuscripts he found. People regarded him as a wonder-working saint, who could perform miraculous deeds through **PRACTICAL KABBALAH**.

BAAL SHEM ('Master of the Name') A title applied to folk healers and wonder workers, in the tradition of **PRACTICAL KABBALAH**, who were able to control nature through the magical powers of divine or angelic names.

BAAL SHEM TOV ('Master of the Good Name') Title of **Israel ben Eliezer**, which often appears as the acronym **BeSHT**, so he is called 'the Besht'.

BAAL TESHUVAH ('penitent', literally 'one who returns') Someone who, having strayed, re-establishes a relationship with God and returns to religious practice.

Bachya ben Asher (thirteenth century), Spain. Kabbalist and Bible commentator. His interpretation of Kabbalah relies on the mystical teachings of **Nachmanides** and of the **ZOHAR**.

BERIAH ('Creation') The second of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (***ATZILUT***, ***BERIAH***, ***YETZIRAH*** and ***ASIYAH***), which represent a hierarchy of the different dimensions through which ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, emanates the finite, mundane world. The world in which the divine throne and its surrounding halls are situated.

BERUR ('separation') Refers to the freeing of holy sparks which are entrapped in the ***KELIPPOT*** ('Shells'). *See also* **BREAKING OF THE VESSELS** *and* ***TIKKUN***.

BESHT *see* **BAAL SHEM TOV**

BET DIN ('house of judgement') Rabbinic court of law.

BINAH ('Understanding') The third of the Ten ***SEFIROT***, the female partner of **CHOKHMAH**.

BITTUL HA-YESH ('annihilation of self') An ultimate goal for some forms of Chasidic mysticism in which the individual self, with all its weaknesses and desires, is overcome so that the mystic can, as it were, stand spiritually naked before God.

BOOK OF FORMATION *see* **SEFER YETZIRAH**

BREAKING OF THE VESSELS After ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, contracted Himself (*see* ***TZIMTZUM***), He shone His light into the ten vessels which were meant to contain it. The vessels were unable to do so and broke, trapping holy sparks (*see* ***NITZOTZOT***) of the light. The situation can be rectified (*see* ***TIKKUN***) by humans engaging in acts of separating (*see* ***BERUR***) the holy from the profane by performing commandments, by studying **TORAH**, and especially by involving themselves in Kabbalah. When these divine sparks have been liberated, the Messianic Age will dawn and the world will be redeemed.

Caro, Joseph (1488–1575), Safed. Author of the main code of **HALAKHAH**, the **SHULCHAN ARUKH**. Caro had an angelic guide or **MAGGID**, the spirit of the **MISHNAH**, whose communications he recorded in his mystical diary, *Maggid Mesharim*.

CHaBaD (initial letters of three higher ***Sefirot***, indicating the intellectual aspects of the divine). The name of the Kabbalistic system devised by **Shneur Zalman of Lyady**, and it stands for **CHOKHMAH** ('Wisdom'), **BINAH** ('Understanding') and **DAAT** ('Knowledge'). The Chasidic subgroup that subscribes to Chabad is known as Lubavitch.

Chaim of Volozhin (1749–1821), Lithuania. Rabbi and Kabbalist, the main disciple of **Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna**, he founded the Volozhin yeshivah, the prototype of all subsequent European Talmudic colleges. He was the author of *Nefesh Hachaim*, the

principle Kabbalistic work of the anti-Chasidic **MITNAGGEDIM**, in which the study of **TORAH** is regarded as the highest form of spiritual and mystical activity.

CHASIDEI ASHKENAZ ('German Pietists') A mystical movement that flourished in Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, independently of those Kabbalistic circles in Spain which produced the **ZOHAR**. The movement influenced the **ASHKENAZI** liturgy with mystical prayers and promoted the magical dimension of Jewish ritual.

CHASIDISM Mystical movement which began in Eastern Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The inspiration behind the movement came from **Israel ben Eliezer**, a Kabbalistic wonder worker or **BAAL SHEM**. After his death in 1760 the Chasidic Movement gathered momentum with a series of leaders basing themselves on the teachings of the founder. Despite intense opposition, and accusations of being a heretical movement influenced by **Shabbetai Tzvi**, Chasidism spread widely and became a dominant part of Orthodoxy.

CHAYAH *see* **SOUL**

CHOKHMAH ('Wisdom') Second of the Ten ***SEFIROT***, on the male side, and partner of the female *Sefirah* **BINAH**.

Cordovero, Moses (1522–70), Safed. Leading Kabbalist, of Spanish origin, in the pre-Lurianic phase of Kabbalah, whose monumental work *Pardes Rimmonim* systematized all of the different mystical strands up to his day. Although his work was eclipsed by the teachings of his younger contemporary, Isaac **Luria**, Cordovero was highly esteemed as a holy sage to whom the prophet **ELIJAH** revealed himself. At his funeral people claimed to have seen a pillar of fire preceding his coffin.

DAAT ('Knowledge') A semi-***SEFIRAH*** coming after **BINAH**, but not a full member in all systems.

DAEMON A heavenly spirit, or angel, who communicates with men. A number of Kabbalists claimed to be guided by a daemon.

DEVEKUT ('cleaving' or 'attachment') Man's attachment to God, even while engaged in secular activities. Among the Chasidic mystics this state of mind was highly valued as a way of freeing the trapped sparks and redeeming the world. *See also* ***TIKKUN***.

Dov Baer of Lubavitch (1773–1827), Russia. Son of the founder of the Chabad/Lubavitch branch of Chasidism, **Shneur Zalman of Lyady**, and leader of the movement after his father's death. Dov Baer is called in Yiddish the 'Mittler Rebbe', the 'Middle Rebbe', since he was the middle of the three founding leaders of the movement (see also Menachem Mendel **Schneersohn** (1789–1866). The Chabad movement is known by the alternate name 'Lubavitch' after the town where he settled. Dov Baer was an advocate of contemplative mysticism, and critical of sham experiences of ecstasy.

Dov Baer of Mezheritch (d. 1772), Ukraine. Leader of the Chasidic Movement after the death of its founder **Israel ben Eliezer**. Unlike his master, Dov Baer was not a charismatic, populist leader but preferred to teach Chasidic Kabbalah to a select group of gifted pupils, who recorded his teachings in different versions. It was said that the Holy Spirit manifested itself in his academy.

EDEN, GARDEN OF *see* **GAN EDEN**

EDOM One of the biblical names for Esau (Genesis 36:1), son of Isaac, it symbolizes the power of violence. The biblical blessing of Isaac to Esau/Edom was: 'You shall live by your sword' (Genesis 27:40).

EIN SOF ('Without End') The Infinite Godhead, which is the source of all reality. *Ein Sof* is devoid of all attributes and nothing can be said about It. Only after the self-contraction (***TZIMTZUM***) of *Ein Sof* does the Infinite Godhead take shape and form in the Ten ***SEFIROT***.

ELIJAH Biblical prophet who was taken up alive into heaven (2 Kings 2) and is thought to return to earth, in various guises, with messages for mankind. In his heavenly mode, Elijah is identified with the angel **METATRON**, and plays a role in **PRACTICAL KABBALAH**. Practising asceticism and living a holy life enabled the Kabbalist to receive mystical revelations from Elijah, who is also the

source of new, insightful ideas. He will return to earth to herald the Messianic age.

Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797), Lithuania. Scholar and Kabbalist who was a major influence on the religious outlook of the **MITNAGGEDIM**, he never occupied any official position in the Jewish community but his authority was widely recognized. He was one of the signatories on documents excommunicating members of the Chasidic Movement (*see* **CHASIDISM**), whom he suspected of heresy. Elijah, as a young man, undertook to create a ***GOLEM*** but stopped when he received a warning from heaven. His main disciple was **Chaim of Volozhin**.

EMANATION *see* ***ATZILUT***

Emden, Jacob (1697–1776), Germany. Critically minded Kabbalist who sought to eradicate heterodoxy. He condemned followers of **Shabbetai Tzvi** as heretics, and tried to undermine their use of Kabbalistic texts, even pointing out anachronisms in the **ZOHAR**, which was reputedly a second-century work but seemed to contain elements of medieval Spanish culture.

ETZ CHAIM *see* **TREE OF LIFE**

Fano, Menachem Azariah de (1548–1620), Italy. Rabbinic scholar and Kabbalist who tried to combine the systematizing Kabbalah of Moses **Cordovero** with the newer insights of Isaac **Luria**. Fano used his considerable wealth to publish Cordovero's writings. He believed that the secret meaning of the Bible text, as expressed by Kabbalists, was the real meaning.

FEMALE WATERS ('*mayyin nukvin*') Mystical activity below in the human world which affects the divine. They represent the female aspect of the union of the upper and lower elements within the divine.

FOUR WORLDS The four dimensions separating ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, from the ordinary world: Emanation (***ATZILUT***) is the dimension closest to *Ein Sof*, followed by Creation (***BERIAH***), Formation (***YETZIRAH***) and Action (***ASIYAH***), the last being the dimension that includes the terrestrial world.

GAN EDEN (‘Garden of Eden’) The orchard in which Adam and Eve lived before their expulsion, according to Genesis 2–3. Rabbinic Judaism knows of two Gardens of Eden: an earthly one, the home of Adam and Eve, and a heavenly upper one, the repository of the souls of the righteous after death. *See also* **PaRDeS** *and* **TREE OF LIFE**.

Gaon of Vilna *see* **Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna**

GEHINNOM (‘Purgatory’) The place where souls are provisionally confined after death to be punished for their sins.

GEMATRIYA (‘numerology’; plural ***GEMATRIYOT***) The assignment of a numerical value to Hebrew words based on the idea that each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is also a number (there being no separate numerals). Words or phrases having a particular numerical value are connected to all other words and phrases having the same value.

GERMAN PIETISTS *see* **CHASIDEI ASHKENAZ**

GILGUL (‘the turning’ of the wheel) Transmigration of souls or reincarnation, whereby a soul, after death, reincarnates into a new body. This doctrine, not found in Rabbinic sources, is common to many Kabbalistic systems. Souls need to transmigrate in order to perfect the process of rectification (***TIKKUN***), which they may have not achieved in a previous life.

GOLEM Artificial man created through Kabbalistic means. There are many tales in Jewish folklore as to how such a being can be formed, and the best known are associated with **Judah Loew of Prague**.

HA-ARI (‘The Lion’) Name by which Isaac **Luria** (Ashkenazi) is known among Kabbalists. Ha-Ari is interpreted by some as an acronym of the three words *Ha-elo-hi Rabbi Isaac* (‘the Divine Rabbi Isaac’) or alternatively *Ashkenazi Rabbi Isaac*, or *Adonenu Rabbi Yitzchak* (‘Our Master Rabbi Isaac’), with the definite article ‘*ha*’ preceding. Through a play on words his disciples were referred to as the ‘lion cubs’.

HAGIOGRAPHA (‘Sacred Writings’) *see* **TORAH**

Hakohen, Tzadok, of Lublin (1823–1900), Poland. Chasidic leader and disciple of Mordecai Joseph **Leiner**. His profound works on Kabbalah and Chasidic theology won respect in wider Jewish circles. Like his master he believed that sin was part of the divine plan, and the ability to sin is connected with the ability for spiritual growth.

HALAKHAH (the ‘Way’) General term for Jewish law affecting all areas of life and ritual, personal and social. *Halakhah*, based on the Babylonian **TALMUD**, was codified at various times. The most important codes were those of Moses **Maimonides** and of Joseph **Caro**. An expert in Jewish law is known as a *halakhist*.

HEAVENLY ACADEMY (Hebrew ‘*yeshivah shel maalah*’ or Aramaic ‘*metivta de-rakia*’) The place in heaven where the souls of dead sages continue to study God’s teachings.

IBBUR (‘impregnation’) A soul can ‘impregnate’ a body that already has a soul. This may be for the sake of the soul already there, which needs help in the process of reincarnation, or be for the benefit of the impregnating soul, which needs to find a body to act through for its own purposes.

ibn Gabbai, Meir (1480–1540), Turkey. Kabbalist, originally of Spanish origin, who was an important interpreter of the teachings of the **ZOHAR** and of the nature of the ***SEFIROT***, which he regarded as an integral part of the divine.

IMMANENCE God’s closeness to man and to the world. Divine immanence encourages the depiction of God in personal terms, and enables man to relate to God and to discover God in the world. The immanence of God is expressed in mystical language about the Divine Presence (***SHEKHINAH***). *See also* **TRANSCENDENCE**.

IMPREGNATION *see* ***IBBUR***

Irgas, Joseph (1685–1730), Italy. Kabbalist descended from Spanish Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism, he was a leading *halakhic* authority among Italian Jews and sought to

explain some of the images of Kabbalah as metaphoric in nature. Irgas sharply attacked heretical interpretations of Jewish mysticism.

Isaac of Acre (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), Palestine. Kabbalist who had angelic visitations from whom he learnt mystical secrets and **PRACTICAL KABBALAH**; later magical use of divine names are based on his teachings. Isaac was a contemporary of **Moses de Leon**, and Isaac's testimony about the **ZOHAR** is an important account of its origin. Moses de Leon told him that he had the original, ancient, manuscripts of the Zohar in his home, but de Leon's widow admitted that her husband had actually written it himself (*Sefer Yuchasin Hashalem*, p. 88).

ISRAEL, PEOPLE OF General name for the Jewish people (based on Genesis 32:29), also known as The Children of Israel, Israelites and Hebrews.

Israel ben Eliezer (1700–60), Ukraine. Known as the Besht, as Israel Besht, as the **BAAL SHEM TOV** or as Israel ben Eliezer Baal Shem Tov. Founder of the Chasidic Movement and populizer of Kabbalah, the Besht was renowned for his application of **PRACTICAL KABBALAH**, curing people through incantations and amulets (*see* ***KEMIYAH***), and performing exorcisms. It was his teaching, applying Kabbalah to everyday situations and thus enabling ordinary people to serve God at a high level, that led to the Chasidic Movement. The Besht claimed that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, who had lived thousands of years before in the reign of King Solomon, was his teacher and guide in the spirit world.

Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (d. *c.* 1782), Ukraine. His full name was Jacob Joseph Hakohen Katz. One of the main disciples of **Israel ben Eliezer**, he wrote the first Chasidic work *Toldot Yaakov Yosef,* published in 1780, in which he cites teachings of the Besht. The book was subject to a decree of excommunication and was burnt by the **MITNAGGEDIM** because it was critical of the Rabbinic establishment and suspected of heresy.

Joseph Chaim of Baghdad (1833–1909). Major **SEPHARDI** *halakhist* and Kabbalist, who was one of the leading rabbis of Iraqi Jewry. He combined *halakhic* and Kabbalistic material in his works.

Judah Hechasid (1150–1217), Germany. Leading figure in the **CHASIDEI ASHKENAZ**, whose mystical teachings, with a special emphasis on ethical behaviour, are contained in his *Sefer Chasidim,* one of the movement's main works. He earned a reputation as a wonder-working mystic among his contemporaries.

Judah Loew of Prague (1525–1609). Rabbi and theologian who wrote extensively on Jewish philosophy and mysticism. In Jewish legend he is best known as the creator of a ***GOLEM***.

Judah the Prince (Judah Ha-Nasi) (second/third centuries), Palestine. Leader of Jewry in the Holy Land and, together with his colleagues, editor of the **MISHNAH**. Judah was known for his holy behaviour and is referred to simply as 'Our Holy Rabbi'.

Kalish, Menachem Mendel, of Warka (1819–68), Poland. Chasidic leader who, because of his preference for seclusion and silent teaching, was known as the 'silent ***TZADDIK'***. He was reputed to sit for hours in silence with his disciples and even with eminent colleagues whom he visited.

KASHER ('fit') A term used primarily of food that may be eaten according to the Jewish dietary laws, but may also refer to people, non-food objects and actions that are considered suitable or respectable. The word is also pronounced 'kosher', particularly among Yiddish speakers, and in this form it has passed into English usage.

KEDUSHAH ('Holiness') Name of part of the synagogue liturgy which proclaims the holiness of God, and a general term for extra dimensions of spiritual development involving separation from the mundane world.

KELIPPAT NOGAH ('Shell of Light') The highest level of the evil world of Shells. It partakes of both good and evil, and the task of man is to release the good within it from its contact with evil.

KELIPPOT ('Shells'; singular ***KELIPPAH)*** The broken segments of the vessels that shattered during the creation process, trapping the holy sparks of divine light. *Kelippot* symbolize the domain of evil which depends upon holiness for its very life.

KEMIYAH (plural ***KEMIYOT***) Amulets often containing small parchment strips with divine or angelic names inscribed on them. Kemiyot were usually worn to cure sickness, ward off demons or bring good fortune. *See also* **BAAL SHEM**, **Israel ben Eliezer** *and* **RAZ**.

KETER ('Crown') The highest of the Ten ***SEFIROT***, closest to ***EIN SOF***, and partaking of the ineffable nature of the Infinite Godhead. Keter represents the divine will.

KETUVIM *see* **TORAH**

KOSHER *see* **KASHER**

LEFT SIDE Symbolically the side of evil, of demons and of black magic, and identified with the ***SITRA ACHRA***.

Leiner, Mordecai Joseph, of Izbica (d. 1854), Poland. Chasidic master and author of *Mei Hashiloach*, he was an original thinker who developed the Kabbalistic idea of the omnipresence of God, claiming that sins themselves were expressions of the divine will.

Levi Isaac of Berditchev (1740–1810), Ukraine. Early Chasidic leader whose compassion for poor, unlettered Jews made him one of the most popular figures of Jewish folklore. He stressed the value of serving God joyfully with ***DEVEKUT*** in all one's activities.

LILITH Queen of demons who, together with her consort **SAMAEL**, leads the demonic forces of the ***SITRA ACHRA***.

Luria, Isaac (1534–1572), Safed. His full name was Isaac Luria Ashkenazi; he was commonly known as the **HA-ARI**, the 'Holy Lion'. Luria was a major figure in Kabbalah and founded a new school of Jewish mysticism, known as Lurianic Kabbalah. He grew up in Egypt, where he spent seven years in isolation on an island in the Nile, developing his own interpretation of the teachings of the **ZOHAR**, before spending the last two years of his life instructing a group of gifted disciples in Palestine.

Luzzato, Moshe Chaim (1707–46), Italy. Kabbalist and prolific author. At the young age of 20 he started receiving communications

from a guardian angel, **MAGGID**, and formed a group of disciples in Padua to bring about the Messianic age through Kabbalistic means. Many of his writings were burned because he was suspected of heresy.

MAGGID ('narrator') A popular preacher, but also used of an angel, **DAEMON** or spirit guide who conveys teachings to humans.

Maid of Ludmir *see* **Werbemacher, Hannah Rachel**

Maimonides, Moses (1136–1204), Egypt. Foremost philosopher and *halakhist* of the Middle Ages. The name 'Maimonides' is Greek for 'son of Maimon', but he is most commonly known as RaMBaM, an acronym of Rabbi Moshe (Moses) ben (son of) Maimon. Maimonides' theology was based on Aristotle, and he generally presents a rational interpretation of Jewish belief. Yet he was claimed as a mystic, Kabbalistic legend telling how he discovered the truths of Kabbalah at the end of his life. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, in his commentary *Migdal Oz* on Maimonides' code, maintained that he had seen an old document in Spain in which Maimonides had recorded his own experiences with **MERKABAH** mysticism.

MALKHUT ('Kingship') The lowest of the Ten ***SEFIROT,*** identified with the **SHEKHINAH**, the Divine Presence, and with the generality of the Jewish people, *Keneset Yisrael.* Malkhut is the most feminine of the *Sefirot* and represents God as 'She' relates to the ordinary world.

MARRANOS Jews forcibly converted to another religion who retained their Jewish practice in secret. It is used mainly of Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity in 1391, to escape mob violence and the massacre of their co-religionists, who were also known as New Christians. Most of those able to leave the Iberian peninsula openly reverted to Judaism.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730–98), Ukraine. As a follower of Lurianic Kabbalah he originally lived an ascetic life, but eventually became a disciple of **Israel ben Eliezer** and of **Dov Baer of Mezheritch**. Menachem Nachum spent the rest of his life preaching and writing as a missionary for Chasidism, often in the face of considerable opposition from the **MITNAGGEDIM**.

MERKABAH (‘Chariot’) An early form of Rabbinic mysticism known as Maaseh Merkabah (‘the deeds of the Chariot’), and its practitioners as *yordei merkabah* (‘those who descend (in or to) the Chariot’). Although the origin, and meaning, of Merkabah in this context is obscure, the idea seems to be that the Chariot is a vehicle for God. Thus the Patriarchs are referred to as the ‘chariot’ in which God, as it were, rides, and they are the basis for the divine in this world. The implication is that God directly relates to certain individuals, and like the angels they are the bearers of His Glory. For Jewish mystics this image is also reversible: the Chariot is the vehicle of mystical ascent to God.

METATRON The chief of all the good angels, who occupies a major role in Kabbalah, he is the angelic form of the transfigured biblical character Enoch, who was taken up alive into heaven by God and transformed into an angelic scribe. The prophet **ELIJAH**, in his heavenly mode, was also identified with the angel Metatron.

MIDRASH (‘searching out’ meaning) Homiletical method of interpreting scripture to bring out lessons by using stories, parables, etc., and also the name for collections of such Rabbinic interpretations.

MISHNAH Earliest official text of the Oral Torah, edited in the late second–early third centuries CE by Rabbi Judah the Prince in Palestine, and personified as a heavenly spirit which communicated with Rabbi Joseph **Caro**.

MITNAGGEDIM (‘opponents’; singular **MITNAGGED**) Orthodox Jewish movement among East European **ASHKENAZI** Jews who opposed the Chasidic Movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though some of the Mitnaggedim were involved with Kabbalah, they tended to regard elements of Chasidic mysticism as heretical in nature.

MITZVAH (‘commandment’; plural **MITZVOT**) A biblical or Rabbinic prescription or prohibition, also used in its widest sense as referring to any good deed approved by Jewish tradition.

Moses Chaim Ephraim of Sudlikov (1748–1800), Ukraine. Kabbalist and visionary; a grandson of **Israel ben Eliezer**, and the

author of *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*, an important early work of Chasidism. Moses Chaim Ephraim popularized a Chasidic interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah.

Moses de Leon (*c.* 1240–1305), Spain. Major figure in the development of Kabbalah and central character in the fellowship of mystics who produced the **ZOHAR**. Although modern scholars view him as the main author of the Zohar, Kabbalists believe that he found an ancient manuscript, hidden for more than a thousand years, which he then circulated among his colleagues.

Nachmanides, Moses (1194–1270), Spain. Bible commentator and Kabbalist. The name 'Nachmanides' is Greek for 'son of Nachman', but he is most commonly known as RaMBaN, an acronym of Rabbi Moshe (Moses) ben (son of) Nachman. He was highly respected as a Talmudic scholar and a *halakhic* authority. His was the first Bible commentary to introduce Kabbalistic elements into its interpretation.

Nachman of Breslav (1722–1811), Ukraine. Great-grandson of **Israel ben Eliezer** and Chasidic ***TZADDIK***. Nachman was a creative Kabbalistic thinker whose ideas are contained mainly in his *Likkutei Moharan*, which was edited by his disciple **Nathan of Nemirov**. Nachman was a controversial figure for his criticism of other Chasidic leaders, for his Messianic beliefs about himself and for his innovative Kabbalistic ideas which seemed heretical to some. Nachman's followers, known as Breslav Chasidim, never appointed a successor to him as leader and are therefore known as 'Dead Chasidim', in Yiddish *'toite Chasidim'*.

Nathan of Nemirov (d. 1830), Ukraine. His full name is Nathan Sternhertz. The main disciple of **Nachman of Breslav**, Nathan recorded Nachman's teachings in a series of works, as well as writing his biography.

NEFESH *see* **SOUL**

NESHAMAH *see* **SOUL**

NEVIIM *see* **TORAH**

NEW CHRISTIANS *see* **MARRANOS**

NITZOTZOT ('Sparks'; singular ***NITZOT)*** Elements of holy light that became trapped in the shells of broken vessels, during the process of Creation. It is man's task to raise these sparks back to their source in God.

NUKBA DI-TEHOMA RABBA ('Hole of the Great Abyss') The place where the Powers of Evil dwell and to which demons retire for the duration of the Sabbath, when they have no power over the world.

PaRDeS ('Paradise') Acronym of four levels of textual interpretation: Peshat = literal meaning, Remez = hints in the text, Derash = homiletics and Sod = secret or mystical teachings. The word 'Pardes', meaning an orchard, was borrowed from the Persian. It was widely used to refer to heaven, the goal of the mystics' ascent, and specifically to the place of spiritual bliss for the souls of the righteous after death.

PENTATEUCH *see* **TORAH**

PRACTICAL KABBALAH ***('Kabbalah maasit)*** 'White' magic performed by Kabbalists through divine or angelic names, used in amulets and incantations. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet were thought to reflect higher powers. Some Kabbalists opposed the use of Practical Kabbalah, because of the danger of mixing up good and evil in trying to control the dark forces of the ***SITRA ACHRA,*** but others engaged in it widely, avoiding the 'black' magic involving demons. Popular books of this white magic, such as 'The Angel Raziel' *(see* **RAZ**), were often used by ordinary Jews.

PROPHETS *see* **TORAH**

RASHI (1040–1105), France. Acronym of Rabbi Shlomoh Yitzchaki, i.e. Solomon ben Isaac. He is the most important commentator on the Bible and the Talmud, and one of the founding fathers of **ASHKENAZI** Jewry.

RAZ ('secret'; plural **RAZIM**, construct **RAZEI** 'secrets of) Underlying mysteries behind the ordinary world. The angel responsible for communicating secret magical techniques of

PRACTICAL KABBALAH is known as Raziel.

REBBE ('Master') Yiddish form of 'Rabbi', used of Chasidic Masters and often accompanied by the title 'the ***TZADDIK'***.

RECTIFICATION *see* ***TIKKUN***

REINCARNATION *see* ***GILGUL***

REPENTANCE *see* ***TESHUVAH***

Ricchi, Emanuel Chai (1688–1743), Italy. Kabbalist and one of the main proponents of Lurianic Kabbalah, he engaged in controversies with other Kabbalists about the literal or allegorical nature of Jewish mystical images, and was not in favour of explaining them away.

RUACH *see* **SOUL**

RUACH HA-KODESH ('The Holy Spirit') The interaction of God with the world takes place through the Holy Spirit, which inspires prophets and saintly individuals. Reaching the spiritual level of the Holy Spirit was an ideal for Kabbalists, for whom there is an intimate connection between it and the ***SHEKHINAH***.

SAFED Town in the Galilee region of northern Israel which was a centre of Kabbalah in the sixteenth century. It was settled by **SEPHARDIC** Jews, among whom were a number of leading Kabbalists, whose families had been exiled from Spain in 1492.

SAMAEL The Prince of Darkness, Satanic figure who, together with one of his consorts **LILITH**, leads the demonic forces of the ***SITRA ACHRA***.

Schneersohn, Menachem Mendel (1789–1866), Russia. Third leader of the **CHABAD** branch of **CHASIDISM**, and grandson of its founder, **Shneur Zalman** of Lyady; he was a leading *halakhic* authority as well as a Kabbalist. Author of a collection of responsa, 'Tzemach Tzedek'.

Schneersohn, Menachem Mendel (1902–94), Russia. The last Lubavitch Rebbe and leader of the **CHABAD** branch of **CHASIDISM**.

Some Lubavitch followers believe he will come back from the dead as the Messiah at the Resurrection. A minority even deny that he really died, and claim that he went into hiding. There is some evidence in Lubavitch texts for the belief that he was an incarnation, in purely Kabbalistic terms, of aspects of the divine.

SEFER YETZIRAh ('Book of Formation') The earliest text of Jewish mysticism, ascribed to the Patriarch Abraham, though most probably written in Palestine in the early centuries of the CE. It deals with God's creative process, the nature of the ***SEFIROT,*** and the role of the alphabet and language. Its terse, and often ambiguous, style has led to many commentaries.

SEFIRAH (plural ***SEFIROT)*** The ten vehicles for the emanation of the divine, which may be understood as channels, providing differentiated shape to the light of ***EIN SOF,*** as it creates, and interacts with, the world. The *Sefirot* are **KETER** (the 'Crown'), **CHOKHMAH** ('Wisdom'), **BINAH** ('Understanding'), Chesed ('Compassion'), Gevurah ('Might'), Tiferet ('Majesty'), Netzach ('Victory'), Hod ('Glory'), Yesod ('Foundation') and **MALKHUT** ('Kingship'). *Sefirot* are in continuous interaction with each other, and the relationship of the males and females is depicted in sexual terms. This is particularly true of the relationship between Tiferet, the male *Sefirah* par excellence, symbolizing the male sexual organ, and Malkhut, symbolizing the female sexual organ. **SAMAEL** is able to seduce Malkhut through the power of man's sins, bringing terrible suffering on the world.

SEPHARDIM (singular **SEPHARDI**) Jews of Iberian origin, 'Sepharad' being an ancient name for Spain. The common language of many Sephardim was Ladino, a Jewish Spanish dialect. Sephardim differed in many ritual matters from **ASHKENAZIM**.

SERVICE *see* **AVODAH**

Shabbetai Tzvi (1626–76), Ottoman Empire. False Messiah around whom a major Messianic Movement grew and spread throughout the Jewish world. His claims were supported by ideas from Lurianic Kabbalah, and some followers even justified Shabbetai's forced conversion to Islam in 1666 as part of the redemptive process of ***TIKKUN***.

Shapiro, Phinehas, of Koretz (1726–91), Ukraine. Chasidic mystic, younger contemporary of **Israel ben Eliezer**, who was devoted to the teachings of the **ZOHAR**. He is reputed to have said that the Zohar kept him a Jew.

SHED ('demon'; plural **SHEDIM**) Demons with very fine, light bodies made from fire and air, enabling them to fly. They are associated with the powers of the ***SITRA ACHRA,*** procreate with humans, and are led by **SAMAEL** and **LILITH**. Those demons produced by seminal emission are attached to their 'biological' father and may tend to hurt their more legitimate siblings.

SHEKHINAH ('in-dwelling' of God) The Divine Presence; identified with the last ***SEFIRAH;*** **MALKHUT**, the most feminine aspect of the divine.

SHELLS *see* ***KELIPPOT***

SHEMA ('Hear') Three biblical passages – Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21 and Numbers 15:37–41 – that make up the central recitation of the daily liturgy, affirming the oneness of God.

SHEOL ('netherworld') A term of biblical origin for the world inhabited by the souls of the dead, usually depicted in negative terms. It is contrasted with the blissful condition of the souls of the righteous in Paradise.

Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1813), Russia. Founder of the Lubavitch branch of **CHASIDISM**, father of **Dov Baer of Lubavitch** and initiator of the Chabad interpretation of Kabbalah, based on an intellectual approach to the ***SEFIROT*** and to Kabbalah. *See also* **CHaBaD**.

SHULCHAN ARUKH ('Laid Table') The main code of Jewish law, written by Rabbi Joseph **Caro** and first printed in Venice in 1565. Various attempts were made to produce a Kabbalistic code of law based on the teachings of Isaac **Luria**, the best known being *Shulchan Arukh Ha-Art,* published by one of his disciples in 1660.

Simeon bar Yochai (second century CE), Palestine. Sage of the period of the **MISHNAH**, who is the spiritual hero of the **ZOHAR**.

According to Rabbinic tradition he hid in a cave for thirteen years being instructed by **ELIJAH**. Simeon is buried in the Galilean village of Meron, which is a site of pilgrimage on the minor festival of Lag B'Omer, the anniversary of his death. Pilgrims come there to study the *Zohar,* build bonfires, and dance and sing songs about him.

SITRA ACHRA ('The Other Side') The anti-matter world of darkness and evil where demonic powers reign, led by **SAMAEL** and **LILITH**. The Ten *Sefirotic* structures of holiness in the divine world have their parallel in the *Sitra Achra* in ***SEFIROT*** of impurity. The *Sitra Achra* is also identified with the **LEFT SIDE**.

SOUL The soul according to Kabbalah is made up of different parts, the higher levels of which are only achieved or activated by people of great spiritual development. The three basic soul levels are *nefesh,* the 'vital soul' shared by all living creatures; *ruach,* the 'spirit', representing the ethical and intellectual dimension of human beings; and *neshamah,* the 'higher soul', which enables man to relate to God and to heavenly things. Not everyone activates their *neshamah.* Beyond these three are two other, rarer parts, *chayah,* 'the living soul', and *yechidah,* 'the singular soul'; they belong to a different dimension of existence and are only found among great-souled individuals.

SPARKS *see* ***NITZOTZOT***

Spira, Nathan Nata (1585–1633), Poland. Kabbalist especially interested in the theory of ***GEMATRIYOT***. This number mysticism enabled him to uncover layers of meaning in interpreting the Bible.

TALMUD ('study') The main text of Rabbinic Judaism, existing in two forms: the Palestinian Talmud (edited around 400 CE, abbreviated 'TJ'), and the longer, more authoritative Babylonian Talmud (edited around 500 CE, abbreviated 'TB'). The Talmud, written in **ARAMAIC**, is an extended commentary on the **MISHNAH**, which was the first official text of the Oral Torah.

TANNA (plural **TANNAIM**) Used for the rabbinic figures of the period of the **MISHNAH**, that is up to the mid third century CE.

TARGUM *see* **ARAMAIC**

TESHUVAH ('repentance') The main method of overcoming sin by turning back to God. The act of repentance is the interface of divine and human worlds, and thus reflects the Divine Presence or ***SHEKHINAH***, and is the last letter of the **TETRAGRAMMATON**.

TETRAGRAMMATON (The 'four-letter' name) The name of God made up of the four Hebrew letters, Y-H-V-H, which is not pronounced and instead is read as *A-donai*, 'my Lord'. Each letter has a series of symbolic meanings, but as a whole signifies the compassionate aspect of the divine.

TIKKUN ('rectification') After the **BREAKING OF THE VESSELS** at the beginning of creation, holy sparks of divine light were trapped in the broken pieces of the vessels, known as ***KELIPPOT*** ('Shells'). It is the task of man to help redeem the world by freeing these sparks. This act of rectification is known as *tikkun*, and involves a dedicated consciousness of attachment to God (***DEVEKUT***) in the performance of religiously mandated acts, of which the main one is engaging in the study and practice of Kabbalah.

TIKKUNEI ZOHAR (also called **TIKKUNIM**) A thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Kabbalistic work which, although composed by a member of the same circle of Spanish mystics that produced the **ZOHAR**, takes an independent stance on a number of issues.

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT Ritual at the onset of the festival of Pentecost ('*Shavuot*' in Hebrew), which commemorates the revelation of the **TORAH** to the Israelites in the Sinai desert. In this ritual holy texts are studied throughout the night until dawn prayers. ***TIKKUN*** means rectification, and the ritual is meant to act as a purification to enable the Torah to be received from God once again in an elevated spiritual condition.

TORAH ('teaching') The general word for revelation and God's teaching, but used primarily to apply to the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses), which is the first, and holiest, section of the Hebrew Bible. The other two sections are Neviim ('Prophets') and Ketuvim ('Writings' or 'Hagiographa'), incorporating Wisdom books and some historical texts. In its widest sense Torah is used to apply to

all divinely inspired Jewish teaching.

TRANSCENDENCE (The 'Otherness' of God) Far beyond human thought and language the highest level of the ***SEFIROT***, not to mention ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead Itself, represents the transcendent aspect of a divine Being utterly different from anything within human imagination. Nothing can be said about this aspect of God, best approached in awe and silence, but transcendence is also combined with divine **IMMANENCE** for a full picture of the mysterious nature of God.

TRANSMIGRATION *see* ***GILGUL***

TREE OF LIFE ('*Etz Chaim*') Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden (**GAN EDEN**) to prevent them eating the fruit of the Tree of Life and living eternally. This tree is regarded as a symbol for the **TORAH**, the provider of spiritual 'life', but specifically for Kabbalists it also represents the secret meaning of the Torah, in other words the divine mysteries which lie behind the surface of its text.

TZADDIK ('righteous man'; plural ***TZADDIKIM***) General word for someone who lives strictly according to the word of God. The world is thought to depend on a foundation of righteous individuals, and in Kabbalah *tzaddik* refers to the ***SEFIRAH*** *Yesod*, the end of the central male group of *Sefirot* symbolizing the male sexual organs. The title *Tzaddik* was widely used of Chasidic Masters.

TZELEM ('Image' or 'Form', based on the divine image of Genesis 1:26) The hidden 'astral body', which is the essential, unique individual. It is the divine image within man and the clothing of his soul. This inner tzelem is reflected in an aura, or shadow, that surrounds the human body but departs thirty days before death.

Tzemach, Jacob (seventeenth century), Safed. His family were **MARRANOS**, but having left Portugal he reverted openly to Judaism and travelled to Safed to study Kabbalah. He is reputed to have discovered, together with a fellow Kabbalist Abraham **Azulai**, unpublished Lurianic manuscripts buried in the tomb of Chaim **Vital**, which he later used in his publications. Tzemach eventually settled in Jerusalem, where he became a leading proponent of

Lurianic Kabbalah. He was active in opposing heretical interpretations of Kabbalah, by the followers of the false Messiah **Shabbetai Tzvi**. He did, however, give his approbation to wonderful tales of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, their king and the magical world they inhabited.

TZIMTZUM ('contraction') The self-limitation of the Infinite Godhead (***EIN SOF***), which originally filled everything, in order to allow space for creation to take place. This paradoxical act of self-contraction plays a central role in Lurianic Kabbalah, and it is the source of evil, which is always a limiting force in the world.

Tzioni, Menachem (fourteenth century), Germany. Kabbalist and Bible commentator, known for his Kabbalistic commentary on the **TORAH**, which blends together the mysticism of the **ZOHAR** and Spain with that of the **CHASIDEI ASHKENAZ** and Germany. Tzioni wrote in defence of the belief in demons and magic, maintaining that there were witches and wizards who could transform themselves into animals.

Vidas, Elijah de (sixteenth century), Safed. Disciple of Moses **Cordovero** and author of *Reshit Chokhmah*, a book of Kabbalistic morals and pietistic guidance, based on Rabbinic teachings and on the **ZOHAR**, including various unpublished manuscripts of that work. Vidas belonged to a pietistic circle of Kabbalists, and intended his work as a manual of spiritual purification for those wishing to engage in Kabbalah. His book title means 'The Beginning of Wisdom', the wisdom referred to being the 'hidden wisdom' of the Kabbalah.

Vilna Gaon *see* **Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna**

Vital, Chaim (1542–1620), Safed. Kabbalist and main disciple of Isaac **Luria**, he was convinced that the lack of interest in Kabbalah was one factor delaying the advent of the Messiah. Vital spent the last fifty years of his life, after Luria's death, propagating his master's system of Kabbalah. He was of an independent mind, putting forward his own version of Lurianic Kabbalah, and criticizing other Kabbalists. Indeed he referred to the angelic **MAGGID** of Joseph **CARO** as a liar. The best known of Vital's works is *Etz Chaim*, the most authoritative version of the Kabbalistic

teachings of Luria, which was praised by a later Kabbalist as the most important Jewish book since the **TORAH** was given to Moses. Vital was reluctant, however, to allow this work to be printed, copied or even studied outside the confines of his house, but his disciples did not accede to this request, and they even dug up his other Kabbalah manuscripts, which he had insisted should be buried with him.

Werbemacher, Hannah Rachel (1805–92), Ukraine. Chasidic Rebbe known as the Maid of Ludmir. According to legends she underwent a spiritual crisis during a serious illness and believed she had been given a new soul. Hannah Rachel started to practise rituals that were usually reserved for men, and began to teach a group of Chasidic followers from behind a partition. Eventually she allowed herself to be persuaded to get married, and her teaching ceased. She eventually migrated to the Holy Land and spent the rest of her life studying Kabbalah.

WORLDS, THE FOUR *see* **FOUR WORLDS**

YECHIDAH *see* **SOUL**

YESHIVAH ('place of sitting'; plural **YESHIVOT**) Talmudic academy in which the main subject of study is the Babylonian **TALMUD**. In a minority of yeshivot Kabbalistic texts are also studied.

YETZER HARA ('Evil Inclination') Those drives, appetites and passions that can lead people into sin, unless controlled by the laws and regulations of the **TORAH**. In the Messianic Age the *Yetzer Hara*, identified by Kabbalists with the dark powers of the ***SITRA ACHRA***, will be overcome and eradicated by the powers of holiness.

YETZIRAH ('Formation') The third of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (***ATZILUT***, ***BERIAH***, ***YETZIRAH*** and **ASIYAH**) which represent a hierarchy of the different dimensions through which ***EIN SOF***, the Infinite Godhead, emanates the finite, mundane world. The world of *Yetzirah* is the heavenly world closest to the more mundane world of *Asiyah*, and is inhabited by angels.

YICHUD (‘being together’) The prohibition on being alone, in a secluded place, with a member of the opposite sex who is not a close relative.

ZOHAR (‘Splendour’) The main text of Jewish mysticism, known as the ‘Bible’ of Kabbalah, produced by a fellowship of Jewish mystics associated with **Moses de Leon** at the end of the thirteenth century in Castille, Spain. The various components of the Zohar are mostly in a literary Aramaic, with some sections in Hebrew, and tell of the exploits and teachings of **Simeon bar Yochai** and his companions in second-century-ce Palestine.

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Breslav, published by Samuel Horowitz

'Sneh Boer Bekotsk' (Jerusalem 1961), by Meir Orian, life and teachings of Menachem Mendel Morgenstern of Kotsk (1787–1859), Poland

'Sulam' *see* '**Ha-Sulom**'

'Talmud', Palestinian Talmud (TJ = Talmud of Jerusalem) and the Babylonian Talmud (TB = Talmud of Babylon). Divided according to the Orders of the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud is referred to by tractate name and page number

'Tana de be Eliyahu Rabbah' (Warsaw 1891), medieval Midrash, Palestine

'Tanya: Likkutei Amarim' (New York 1969), by Shneur Zalman of Lyady

'Targum Jonathan', pre-seventh century CE, Palestine, Aramaic translation of Scripture

'TB' = Talmud of Babylon *see* '**Talmud**'

'Teshuot Chen' (Berditchev 1816), by Gedaliah ben Isaac of Linitz (d. 1814), Ukraine

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'Tikkunei Zohar' (Jerusalem, 1978), with the commentary 'Nitzotzei Zohar', originally composed in thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, Spain

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* For the Talmud and other terms and people associated with Kabbalah, see Glossary and Select Biographies.

1 This is expressed in the ‘Mishnah’: ‘Anyone who contemplates… what was before all things and what will be after them, it is fitting that he should not have come into the world’ (‘Mishnah’, Chagigah 2:1). See also pp. 8–9.

1 ‘Tikkunei Zohar’, Tikkun 70.
2 As mentioned in the ‘Zohar’ 3:298a, Pinchas Reiya Mehemna.

1 Based on Proverbs 10:7: ‘The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing; but the name of the wicked shall rot.’ It can thus mean ‘of blessed memory’, a sign of respect for the honoured dead, but by extension ‘may their memory be a blessing for us’ because their exemplary life can inspire us.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Chagigah 2:1.
2 Song of Songs 2:9.

1 Here meaning divine substructures.

2 The image of the exile of the people of Judea to Babylon, which began with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 bce, is used of all suffering of Jews in later exile.

1 ‘Midrash Lamentations Rabbah’, Eichah, Introduction, Preface 2.

2 1 Chronicles 28:9.

1 Proverbs 14:15.

2 2 In Chasidic Kabbalah this contracting (*tzimtzum*) is often thought of as a psychological state, the hiding of God in all things so that an autonomous world seems to have independent existence for human consciousness.

3 Proverbs 16:28.

1 Psalm 62:13.
2 Cf. 2 Samuel 14:14.

1 Psalm 23:4.

2 ‘Tikkunei Zohar’ 65b, Tikkun 22.

3 Ezekiel 1:26, in his vision of heaven.

4 *Keveyakhol*, used when overtly anthropomorphic terms are applied to God.

5 ‘Tana de be Eliyahu Rabbah’ 9.

1 Literally, the opening of a fine needle.
2 Literally, the early Pharisaic pietists.
3 The Tetragrammaton, Y-H-V-H.
4 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 4:13.

1 The prophet who ascended alive into heaven and comes back to earth to communicate with humans.

2 Every soul has a root or source in heaven.

1 *Yichud*, uniting the female and male aspects of the divine.
2 'TB', Chagigah 14b: see pp. 52–3.
3 Literally, push it away.

1 Ezekiel 36:26.

1 Genesis 18:2.

2 Genesis 1:27 and 9:6.

3 ‘TB’, Megillah 28a, ‘Rabbi Yochanan said: It is forbidden to look at the image of the likeness of an evil man.’

1 An anti-Christian polemic.

2 Literally, with a very great power in the rule of his destiny (*mazal*). See also p. 44 n. 1.

3 Exodus 20:3.

1 Cf. ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 21:5.
2 For such partitions are all ultimately an illusion.

1 Proverbs 1:22.
2 Psalm 96:3.

1 The three highest *Sefirot*, *Keter*, *Chokhmah* and *Binah*, are all elevated and hidden but the light of the Infinite Godhead, *Ein Sof*, is beyond them.

2 In the Infinite Godhead Himself.

3 They are ordered in three columns, those in the right are male and those in the left female.

4 That of the primordial man, Adam Kadmon.

1 The ‘end’ and the ‘sign’ are, respectively, *Tiferet* (also known as *Rachamim*), the masculine aspect and the circumcised male sexual organ.

2 Literally, the Torah of the Mouth; also known as the *Shekhinah*, the lowest *Sefirah*.

3 Deuteronomy 29:28. *Chokhmah* and *Binah* are numbers two and three in the order of the *Sefirot*. *Chokhmah* is the first masculine *Sefirah*, out of which the divine flow emanates. *Binah* is the highest feminine *Sefirah*.

1 Respectively, *Chesed*, the fourth *Sefirah*, masculine on the right side; *Gevurah* (also known as *Din*), the fifth *Sefirah*, feminine on the left side; and *Tiferet*, the sixth *Sefirah*, the primary masculine Sefirah of the centre.

1 Or *Malkhut*, the last and lowest of the *Sefirot*, the feminine aspect of the divine.

2 Ezekiel 18:32; it should say ‘that the living should die’, but the actual words ‘that the dead should die’ refer to those already dead in this life, i.e. the wicked.

3 According to Rabbinic tradition there are 248 ‘organs’ in the human body (e.g. 30 in a foot, 6 in each toe), parallel to the 248 positive commandments in the Torah: see ‘Mishnah’, Oholot 1:8.

4 The last letter of the Tetragrammaton symbolizes the presence of God, the *Shekhinah*, which rests on the head of the righteous and in divine/ angelic form guides them.

1 The life of the soul after death, or in the Messianic era.

2 ‘TB’, Taanit 11a-b, quoting Hosea 11:9.

3 A chariot for a rider has the meaning of a base.

4 They were the vehicle of God’s dwelling in the world, having made themselves transparent to His presence within them.

1 1 Isaiah 63:9.

1 The highest feminine *Sefirah*.
2 'Midrash Genesis Rabbah' 2:5.
3 Literally, the four cubits of his surroundings.

1 Psalm 16:8 and ‘Mishnah’, Avot 4:20. YHVH is usually translated simply, as here, as ‘the Lord’.

2 Literally ‘teaching’, here referring to Scripture and especially the Pentateuch.

3 Chronicles of their reign.

1 *Ruchot* can mean ‘winds’ or ‘spirits’. Psalm 104:4 is usually translated as ‘He makes winds his messengers.’

2 As in biblical stories about angels visiting the earth, where their ‘garment’ symbolizes a this-worldly covering for a hidden aspect of the divine in the language of mystics.

3 The Torah is the blueprint of Creation through which all reality was formed. While it is essentially spiritual, in order to serve as revelation it needs to ‘come down’ to the level of this world. Its ‘garments’ are the stories and everyday matters of the Bible text.

4 The mystics (‘Wise people’) who have received divine revelation.

5 Aramaic *nishmata*, the higher soul within.

1 A future mystical revelation of the Messianic era.

2 The *Shekhinah*, an aspect of the divine which relates directly to the human world.

3 Aramaic *attika kaddisha*, referring to *Keter*, the highest *Sefirah*.

4 A plain vessel is best, preferably an earthenware one, otherwise the wine may spoil.

1 Proverbs 5:19.
2 Aramaic *kelippin*.
3 Literally, a vain thing.

1 ‘Essence’ and ‘bones’ are similar words in Hebrew.

2 Isaiah 51:4.

3 ‘Essences’ here is literally ‘bones’, but see n. 1 above. See the words of God in Ezekiel 37:3.

1 ‘Midrash Exodus Rabbah’ 33:6.

2 Such an expression is not actually found in the ‘Zohar’, although the idea that the whole Torah is one long name of God is quite common.

3 ‘Zohar’ 2:60a, Beshalach.

4 Exodus 15:22, after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the songs of Moses and his sister Miriam.

1 ‘TB’, Nedarim 81a.

1 Genesis 49:6. It seems that Rebbe Elimelekh of Lyzhansk (1717–87), one of the early Chasidic masters, had a slightly different version of Pardes and its equivalents.

1 *Shekhinah* appears sometimes in the form of a human woman.

2 ‘TB’, Sukkah 21b: Rabbi Acha bar Adda said in the name of Rab: From where do we know that even the casual conversation of scholars demands study? From the Scriptural verse, ‘And whose leaf does not wither’ (Psalm 1:3). A righteous man is like a tree and his small talk may be compared to a leaf.

1 ‘TB’, Eruvin 54b.

2 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 60:8.

3 Which comes to man through divine inspiration, which is the Holy Spirit.

4 If God knows what we will choose, then it seems that our choice is determined and we are not really free to change it. This philosophical problem vexed religious philosophers in the Middle Ages.

1 There is a widely held assumption that, unlike man, angels do not have free will.

1 Originally meaning ‘constellation’ but later coming to mean ‘luck’.

2 Genesis 16:5.

3 ‘TB’, Shabbat 156a.

1 Deuteronomy 27:21.
2 Reference to *Ein Sof*(the King) and *Keter*, the first *Sefirah*(Light).

1 A reference to the *Sefirah Chokhmah*.

2 The world was created through the word, and the ten sayings of God are identified by the mystics with the Ten *Sefirot*.

1 ‘TB’, Ketubot 5a.
2 See *Tikkun*in Glossary.

1 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 4:8. The second day of Creation according to Jewish reckoning, since creation began on Sunday and culminated on the seventh day, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

1 Genesis 1:6.

2 In Hebrew the days of the week do not have names, they are merely called first day (Sunday), second day (Monday), etc.

3 ‘Zohar’ 3:273a, Ekev.

4 ‘TB’, Pesachim 109b. Pairs of items reflect duality, so the prohibition is on even numbers but not on odd.

5 Deuteronomy 4:11.

1 Literally, be established with two knots.

1 Job 5:7; ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 13:7.
2 Literally, has his eyes in his head.

1 Elisha ben Avuyah.
2 Psalm 101:7.

1 Psalm 116:15.

2 Proverbs 25:16.

3 Ecclesiastes 5:5.

4 Song of Songs 1:4.

5 By eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in Paradise.

1 Genesis 1:3–4.
2 Genesis 1:3.

1 Genesis 1:3.

2 Psalm 31:20.

3 Just before he died Moses ascended Mt Nebo and looked over the Promised Land: see Deuteronomy 34:1–5.

4 According to the Rabbinic tradition people at this time (Enosh) began worshipping idols; Genesis 7; and Genesis 11.

5 Exodus 34:30.

1 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 1:1, the parable is about how an architect does not build a building without using drawings, so God used the Torah as His blueprint for the world.

2 ‘Zohar’ 24b, Chadash Shir Hashirim.

3 ‘TB’, Yevamot 63a, ‘All the families of the earth… are blessed only for Israel’s sake. All the nations of the earth, even the ships that go from Gaul to Spain, are blessed only for Israel’s sake.’

1 The point and the surrounds.

1 ‘Zohar’ 1:24a, Bereshit.

2 Job 28:12; literally, ‘from where’, but the Hebrew word is *meayin*, and the word for ‘nothingness’ is *ayin*, so this can be read as ‘from *ay*in’, i.e. from Nothing.

1 Literally, all the days and measures.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 2:14.

1 Proverbs 2:19.

1 The word for Hebrew *ivri*can also mean ‘the one who passes over’.

2 Isaiah 6:3.

1 ‘TJ’, Taanit 1.
2 Cf. Deuteronomy 30:11.

1 An example is the prophet Elijah who journeyed through the wilderness for forty days to the mountain of God at Horeb (1 Kings 19) without conjuring angels to effect a shorter journey.

2 There are 613 commandments, 248 positive and 365 negative. Similarly there are 613 ‘organs’ of the human body (subdivided into 248 and 365, parallel to the commandments). What exactly an organ is in Rabbinic literature is not defined: can a sinew be an organ in a different context? These are symbolic, magical numbers, not exactly real anatomy. (From ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 44:21.)

1 Of male and female within the Godhead.

2 ‘TB’, Chagigah 14a.

3 Exodus 20:15, relating to the experience of the Israelites during the revelation of God at Mt Sinai. It does not say they ‘heard the sounds’ but they ‘saw the sounds’; see ‘Tikkunei Zohar’, Tikkun 38, p. 79a.

1 Symbolizing the power of violence, the biblical blessing of Isaac to his son Esau/Edom was: ‘You shall live by your sword’ (Genesis 27:40).

1 ‘TB’, Chagigah 14a, ‘for Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Jonathan said: From every utterance that goes forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, an angel is created.’

2 Jeremiah 23:29. ‘TB’, Shabbat 88b, ‘It was taught in the School of Rabbi Ishmael: “Like a hammer breaks up the rock”. Just as this hammer is split up into a number of sparks, so each saying that emerged from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, is split into seventy languages.’

3 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 10:10, ‘Rabbi Simon said: There is no single herb which does not have a constellation *[mazal]* in heaven which strikes it and says to it “Grow”.’

4 The followers of Rebbe Nachman of Breslav took this idea that all healing comes from God to the extent that they avoided doctors, preferring herbal and other alternative medicines which express this faith.

5 Proverbs 4:22.

1 Rabbinic prohibitions introduced in order to prevent people from transgressing biblical laws are referred to as ‘fences’ around the Torah.

2 Deuteronomy 17:11.

1 Genesis 5:24; ‘journeyed’ is, literally, ‘went’ or ‘walked’. The ‘condition of journeying’ is a form of mystical contemplation.

2 Genesis 6:9; Genesis 17:1.

1 The sun, moon and stars.

2 ‘for the Lord took him’.

3 2 Kings 2:10, spoken by Elijah, before he was taken up into heaven, to his disciple Elisha.

1 Genesis 5:24.

1 Genesis 5:24.

1 Genesis 17:22 and ‘Bachya ben Asher’; Genesis 35:13, referring to Jacob.

2 Genesis 28:13, also referring to Jacob. Although there is no similar scriptural text about the Patriarch Isaac, he is still regarded as one of those whom God singled out to allow the divine name to apply to him in a phrase such as ‘God of Isaac’.

3 The other central tree in Eden, symbolizing God’s teaching.

1 Conversion in Judaism involves the proselyte undergoing *mikveh*.

2 Genesis 18:4. See p. 20.

3 Genesis 3:22, when God decided to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

1 By the angel Raziel.
2 Genesis 5:1.

1 Corresponding to the 72 syllables in one of the divine names, a very powerful name reportedly used by Moses to split the Red Sea. Cf. *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, by Joshua Trachtenberg, p. 96.

2 See ‘Midrash Pesikta Rabbati’ 20; Hadraniel had opposed the creation of man, and opposed Moses’ ascent into heaven to receive the Torah, but eventually became a servant and guide for him.

3 An ancient spring in the Kidron valley near Jerusalem, where Adam engaged in penitential practices.

1 Genesis 36:29–31, these seven kings of Edom, a mountainous area south of the Dead Sea, represent the powers of evil, the seven lower *Sefirot* of the *Sitra Achra*.

1 Genesis 3:15.

1 ‘Zohar’ 3:149a–b, Behaalotecha.
2 Literally ‘father’, Adam.
3 Moses and the Israelites at Mt Sinai.
4 ‘TB’, Shabbat 146a.

1 ‘Zohar’ 3:152a, Behaalotecha. ‘Future times’ are the Messianic age.

2 Isaiah 30:20; in the original, ‘Your Master will hide Himself no more, and your eyes will behold your Master.’

3 ‘TB’, Chagigah 12a.

4 Cf. ‘TB’, Berakhot 4b, where it is said that Elijah needs four steps, presumably because, though he is a heavenly being, he still has an earthly aspect.

5 If Elijah does stay for the circumcision, he subsequently testifies to God that the Covenant has been kept.

1 1 Kings 19:9–10, Elijah had fled from Queen Jezebel into the desert to the mount of God at Horeb and hid in a cave.

2 2 Kings 2:11.

3 Exodus 19:20; Exodus 24:18.

1 Literally, stood against him.
2 To enter heaven without dying.

1 Otherwise death would have been overcome for all humans.
2 2 Kings 2:11.
3 ‘Zohar’ 1:151b, Vayetze.

1 See ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 71:9.
2 An early biblical figure, the oldest person in the Bible.
3 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah’s ascension is 2 Kings 2:11.

1 Genesis 1:26.
2 Literally, before.
3 Cf. Psalm 8:5.
4 Cf. 1 Kings 18:39.
5 Literally, concerning.

1 Malachi 3:23–4.

1 Isaiah 11:9.

1 Daniel 12:3.

2 The mystical secrets of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai and his colleagues contained in the literature of the Zohar were thus the product of Elijah's inspiration and not actually passed on to them by their teachers. This accounts for the innovations in Kabbalistic teachings.

1 The daemon, who communicated heavenly secrets to Rabbi Caro and spoke through his mouth, was the spirit of the ‘Mishnah’.

2 Cf. Song of Songs 5:2.

3 See Genesis 28:15; these are the words of God to the Patriarch Jacob when he dreamt of a ladder reaching heaven.

4 Literally, mouth to mouth.

5 Literally, ‘grant you peace’; the usual greeting in Hebrew is ‘peace’, ‘shalom’.

6 The custom was to dilute wine with water, since the water was unsanitary the alcohol in wine helped kill germs and mask the taste.

1 Baal Shem Tov.

2 Yiddish ‘Sabbath greetings’.

3 It was normal to eat two meals on weekdays, and the Rabbis insisted that one should eat an extra meal on Saturday afternoon, as well as the normal meals on Friday night and at Saturday lunchtime, to mark the special nature of the Sabbath (three in all).

4 Literally, ‘Accompanying the Queen’. It was customary, particularly among the mystics, to eat an extra-festive meal on Saturday night to accompany the ‘Queen Sabbath’ on her departure.

1 The numerical value, *gematriya*, of the Hebrew for Elijah, *Eliyahu*, is 52.

2 After the termination of the Sabbath.

3 The *gematriya* of the Hebrew for ‘Elijah the prophet’, *Eliyahu Hanavi*, is 72.

1 Genesis 5:24.
2 Genesis 5:24.
3 Metatron is known as *na-ar*, ‘the youth’ or ‘the lad’.
4 The mystics.

1 In the Tosefta, ‘Zohar’ 1:60a, Noah.
2 Genesis 2:11; Exodus 3:4.
3 As the man Enoch.
4 ‘TB’, Megillah 19b.

1 Exodus 33:18–23.

1 The traditional author of Psalms.
2 Psalm 86:2.

1 Zechariah 4:10; Psalm 34:16; Numbers 11:1,12 and other verses; Genesis 8:21; Exodus 6:10 and other verses.

1 Genesis 1:27.
2 Deuteronomy 4:15.
3 Human images and the shape of the Hebrew letters.

1 Tetragrammaton names.

1 Recited by the cantor to indicate breaks in the service, and by mourners. It can only be said in the presence of a *minyan* of ten adult males.

1 Proverbs 4:19.
2 ‘TB’, Berakhot 57b.

1 Cf. ‘TB’, Berakhot 15b.
2 Isaiah 26:19.
3 Genesis 12:5.

1 The original sometimes refers to the precious stone as a pearl and sometimes as a diamond.

1 Cf. ‘TB’, Chagigah 11a.

1 Genesis 1:1.
2 Literally, the true wisdom.
3 From the ‘Zohar’.

1 Unifying the male and female aspects of God, a goal of many religious activities according to the Kabbalists.

2 The mystics.

3 Literally, clothed.

1 Literally, able to learn.
2 By Rabbi Chaim Vital.

1 Another name for Mt Sinai, the primary locus of the revelation of the Torah.

2 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 6:2.

3 Song of Songs 5:9.

1 See ‘Zohar’ 3:149: ‘Israel are indeed worthy because they have been given a heavenly Torah, a Torah of truth. Anyone who maintains that the narrative parts of the Torah merely come to tell us a story alone should waste away. For then the Torah would not be a heavenly Torah and a Torah of truth’, and ‘Zohar’ 3:152a: ‘The stories of the Torah are the garments of the Torah. Those who think that these stories are the real Torah and not anything else, may they waste away and not have any portion in the World to Come.’

2 Literally, uprooting mountains and grinding them against each other with hair-splitting debates.

3 Jeremiah 4:24.

4 Literally, never open their mouths.

5 Literally, think in their own eyes.

1 The mystics.
2 One of the agricultural images used of Kabbalists.

1 Leviticus 19:18.
2 Psalm 16:8.
3 Daniel 2:21.

1 See Isaiah 59:10.

2 *Chen* means ‘grace’, but it is an acronym of *Chokhmah Nistarah*, ‘secret wisdom’. The phrase thus literally means ‘knowers of secret wisdom’.

3 Isaiah 42:19.

4 See Genesis 3:24, since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, angels with fiery swords, known as cherubim, guard the path back to prevent humans re-entering.

1 The secret wisdom of the Kabbalists.

1 Literally, ‘uprooting the plants’ of Paradise.

1 The place in heaven where the souls of dead sages continue to study God’s teachings.

1 Acronym of Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquieres (*c.* 1125–98).

1 Using a person’s face to reveal their character and personality.

1 Lamentations 3:6.

2 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin, where the Babylonian Talmud is referred to as dark and difficult. The Talmud here refers not to the text, as such, but to the Babylonian method and content of study which eventually produced the text.

3 Hebrew for ‘brightness’. Also the name of the main Kabbalistic text.

1 Malachi 3:20.
2 Exodus 34:29.
3 A small-scale model of the cosmos.
4 Shaar Hayirah 9. From ‘Tikkunei Zohar’, Tikkun 70, p. 130b.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 5:1.

1 Psalm 33:6, taken literally it was ‘the word’ rather than ‘the words’ that brought the world into being.

2 Psalm 33:9.

3 The actualization was through the word of God, but the original Creation was through a single silent letter, part of the divine name.

1 Exodus 14: 19-21, in ‘TB’, Sukkah 45a. Rabbi Solomon is Rashi.

2 Even where it is merely a matter of spelling, and it does not change the meaning of a word.

1 ‘TB’, Sukkah 21b.

1 A child born from an adulterous or incestuous relationship.

2 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 6:1. Rabbi Meir was a second-century Mishnaic sage.

1 Zohar’ 2:60a.
2 Proverbs 8:22.

1 Like God did.

2 Isaiah 59:2, understood to mean that without human sin man could have the same creative abilities as God.

3 Or ‘You are from the colleagues’.

4 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 65b, see preceding selection.

5 Leviticus 22:32.

1 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 19b.
2 See p. 136 n. 3.
3 Genesis 9:6.

1 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 10:6.

2 Literally ‘Chapter of Song’, a text containing the praises sung by nature and the animal world to God.

3 The lower waters representing the female aspect of the union of the lower and upper elements within the divine.

1 Literally, because of the falling down of faith.
2 Deuteronomy 28:59.
3 ‘TB’, Taanit 8a.
4 When he prescribes a course of healing.

1 Fifteenth-century Spanish Kabbalist who tried to bring about Messianic redemption through Kabbalistic magic, but was eventually ensnared by Samael, and sixteenth-century Marrano Kabbalist who engaged in efforts to bring about Messianic redemption and was eventually martyred.

2 The leaves of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represent external magical forces.

3 The sorcery and magic brought by Adam.

1 Genesis 4:26.
2 Job 21:2.

1 Literally, children of a higher level.

1 The kosher dietary laws prohibit certain fats from the hindquarters of an animal being eaten.

2 Literally, free will in its hand.

3 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 4:2.

1 Isaiah 30:18.

2 Numbers 15:24.

3 These 72 (Sanhedrin plus Moses and Aaron) are necessary for the world to continue existing.

4 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 99a, i.e. God reveals Himself to these righteous people.

5 Of the righteous.

6 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 99a.

7 Literally, ‘seventy faces’; with the two Torahs, they make 72.

8 Hosea 10:2.

1 Isaiah 30:18.
2 Genesis 15:10. *Lo* is numerically 36, and *eleh* 36.
3 With the numerical value of 72.

1 (1795–1864), a major Russian figure of the early days of Chabad Chasidism.

2 Every sacred text is open to levels of meaning, and ‘peshat’ is the lowest, because most literal, level.

1 Job 27:27.

1 ‘TB’, Berakhot 64a.
2 Psalm 104:23.

1 There is a tradition that ten sages were martyred in Palestine by the Romans in the early centuries of the common era. Although the ten were not all contemporaries, their deaths were regarded as one event, and typological of all Jewish martyrdown.

1 ‘Midrash Tanchuma’, Ki Tisa 33.

2 ‘Seder Gan Eden’, ‘Otzar Midrashim’, p. 89. The Jewish Sabbath begins just before sunset on Friday evening.

3 From the dead in Purgatory.

1 Of Ezekiel's vision of heaven, usually translated as 'electricity'.

2 The transition level between the world of the Shells (*Kelippot*) and the world of holiness.

3 Genesis 3:21.

1 The organs correspond to the number of positive commandments in the Torah, and the sinews to the number of negative commandments (of the form ‘Thou shall not do’) in the Torah.

1 Job 31:4.

1 Literally, Amorite ways.

1 Proverbs 6:23; Proverbs 20:27.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 4:3.
2 He does not achieve his full potential.
3 Literally, sparks.

1 Becomes immanent in the human mind.

2 Genesis 1:27. ‘In his own image’ is normally understood to mean that God created man in His (i.e. God’s) own image. With some poetic licence it can be interpreted to refer to man’s own, unique, individual image.

1 See ‘Mishnah’, Avot 3:15.
2 Proverbs 6:23.
3 Proverbs 20:27.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 6:10.

2 Ezekiel 34:31, or ‘You are man.’

3 See ‘TB’, Yevamot 61a, and ‘TB’, Bava Metzia 114b. A number of Talmudic commentators interpret this to mean that when the word ‘man’ is used in the context of a commandment then it is only addressed to Jews and not to Gentiles, but this does not mean that idolaters, heathens or Gentiles in general are not human. Cf. ‘Maharatz Chayot’ on Yevamot 61 a. Kabbalah takes a more essentialist view of the differences between Jews and Gentiles.

1 1 Chronicles 17:21.

2 Isaiah 2:5.

3 ‘TB’ Pesachim 88a.

4 Genesis 22:14, and Genesis 24:63.

5 Genesis 28:19, after Jacob dreamt of a ladder going up to heaven, ‘He called the name of the place the House of God.’ According to Rabbinic tradition he slept on the site of the future temple.

1 Isaiah 56:7.
2 ‘Zohar’ 1:58a, Bereshit.

1 Exodus 20:3.

2 Exodus 22:23.

3 The circumcised male genital organ, circumcision being a sign of the covenant between Jews, the children of the Patriarch Abraham, and God. Sexual impropriety here refers specifically to illicit sexual relations with Gentile women.

4 Deuteronomy 27:21.

5 Deuteronomy 30:15.

6 When they are in the body of a heathen.

1 Deuteronomy 30:19.

2 Neither holy nor impure, but profane who do not choose the good.

3 The religions of Ishmael and Esau, usually symbolizing Islam and Christianity, are obviously based on Jewish teaching but do not have the holiness of the latter.

4 Isaiah 14:29.

5 See p. 167 n. 3.

6 They belong to God.

1 Exodus 12:43–5.
2 Proverbs 4:2.

1 Jeremiah 33:25.
2 Genesis 1:24.
3 Isaiah 52:14.
4 Isaiah 50:3.

1 Genesis 1:27–8.

2 With the *Shekhinah* in exile, the male and female aspects of the divine are not united. This explanation of Isaiah 52:14 indicates that the absence of male and female union represents a change in the way God and the world interact.

3 i.e. Friday night, the Shabbat eve.

4 After menstruation.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 3:13.

1 A poetical way of saying that God neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2 Exodus 2:6, when the daughter of Pharaoh found the casket with the baby Moses in the bulrushes.

3 Ibid.

4 In Yiddish a ‘stille schweige geshrei’.

1 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 3:2.
2 Nothing for the mystics also refers to *Ein Sof*.
3 1 Samuel 1:13.

1 Two thousand years from the creation of the world to give the Torah to Moses and the Israelites.

2 Genesis 21:17, about Ishmael in the wilderness of Beer Sheba. (God hears the silent cry of people.)

3 Deuteronomy 31:18.

1 Deuteronomy 14:1.
2 Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
3 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 47:8.

1 i.e. the human body and the Evil Inclination.
2 i.e. the physical side and the Evil Inclination.
3 Literally, without clothing.

1 Genesis 3:22.

2 With the meaning ‘unified with us’.

3 The number of the Israelites, or more exactly of adult male Israelites, who came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

1 ‘TB’, Shabbat 146a.

2 Which led to Eve and Adam eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and not through their own sins.

3 ‘TB’, Shabbat 55b.

1 The sages of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods.

1 ‘Zohar’ 1:32a, Bereshit.

2 Deuteronomy 32:47, although ‘for you’ is the usual translation, the Hebrew can also be read as ‘from you’.

3 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 1:14.

1 The Kabbalists.
2 Psalm 16:8, and Deuteronomy 4:35.

1 From the Friday night liturgical poem ‘Lecha Dodi’.

1 Genesis 5:1.

1 Reflects the last *Sefirah Malkhut,* also called the Divine Presence or *Shekhinah,* and is the last letter of the Tetragrammaton.

2 Based on Proverbs 4:23.

3 Produced by *Malkhut.*

4 Deuteronomy 8:3.

5 Numbers 12:8, and Psalm 39:7.

6 'TB', Berakhot 7a.

1 Ecclesiastes 2:26.

2 Genesis 6:9.

3 Genesis 22:11, Genesis 46:2, Exodus 3:4, 1 Samuel 3:10.

4 God tested Abraham and told him to offer up his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, Genesis 22. This story is known as the ‘Akedah’, the ‘binding’ of Isaac.

5 Genesis 46:1: ‘And Israel… offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.’

1 Mineral, vegetable, animal and human.
2 Deuteronomy 20:19.

1 ‘TB’, Berakhot 6b.

1 Psalm 12:9.

1 ‘TB’, Shabbat 55a.
2 Psalm 27:1.
3 Psalm 85:12.
4 ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 8:5.

1 Psalm 145:13.
2 ‘Tikkunei Zohar’ 17a.
3 Leviticus 16:16.

1 Genesis 2:7.
2 Targum Onkelos.

1 Literally, his own soul.

2 Based on the biblical description in Exodus 17:12 of Moses keeping his hands held high in the battle with Amalekites.

3 Based on Ezekiel 21:11.

1 ‘TB’, Yoma 21b.
2 Job 7:9.
3 1 Samuel 2:6. One can indeed ascend from *Sheol.*

1 Deuteronomy 8:10.
2 i.e. all the *Sefirot*.
3 i.e. of the person making the blessing.

1 Genesis 28:11; literally, ‘he came upon the place’, but one of the names of God is *makom* which means ‘place’, and ‘he came upon’ can also be translated ‘he entreated’.

2 Literally ‘with all of the tribes’, since his children were later to become the founding fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

3 Genesis 32:1; literally, ‘they met him’.

4 Since he was now married, and therefore male and female.

1 i.e. the poor person.
2 Of the poor person.
3 Genesis 12:5.

1 Elijah was invisible to him.
2 Literally, drawn near to.

1 Literally, the daughter of a strange god.
2 The circumcised penis.
3 Psalm 84:12.
4 Exodus 20:3–5.
5 Whether for idolatry or sexual relations with a heathen.

1 Performs an abortion.
2 The sword, famine and death.
3 Genesis 1:28.
4 Exodus 1:22.

1 In the Jerusalem Temple.
2 i.e. festival of Tabernacles, the priests and Levites.
3 Putting in a wooden gallery for the women.
4 Literally, men of deeds.
5 These golden candlesticks.

1 An additional festival at the end of the festival of Tabernacles when the yearly Torah reading cycle is concluded and restarted. This is one of the happiest days of the Jewish calendar when people dance with the Torah scrolls.

2 Equivalent to the secular year 1928.

3 Yiddish, a Chasidic gathering around a table.

4 For Kabbalists God is beyond time and space. Ultimately this allows the mystic, in his attachment to an aspect of the divine, to overcome distance or time.

1 Literally, sweetens.

2 Numbers 8:8.

3 As was done by the two sons of Aaron, the biblical high priest, who were punished by death when they offered up strange fire before the Lord. See Leviticus 10:1–2.

1 Psalm 16:8.
2 The Tetragrammaton.

1 Deuteronomy 23:15.

2 ‘Zohar Chadash’, Midrash Ruth, ‘Teaching of the Ten Things before Grace after Meals’.

1 Tosefot Menachot 110a, citing a Midrash.

2 (1745–1815), Polish Chasidic leader known as the ‘Seer of Lublin’ because of his reputation for spiritual vision and insight.

3 1 Kings 11–13; after the death of King Solomon he set up the breakaway northern kingdom of Israel, and encouraged people to worship idols.

4 Given by the food.

5 Exodus 24:11.

1 ‘TB’, Berakhot 55a.

1 Ezekiel 16:14.

2 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 21a.

3 Solomon Alkabetz (1505–84), liturgical poet and Kabbalist and a contemporary of Caro.

4 Literally, ‘the purposes of *miyun’,* that is the right of a young girl to nullify a marriage arranged for her by her mother or brothers before she comes of age. The usual method of determining the onset of puberty was the growth of two pubic hairs.

5 Where the follicles should have been.

6 Literally, by the upper signs.

7 See p. 34 n. 2.

1 Genesis 1:29.

1 Genesis 8:21.
2 Genesis 9:3.

1 Lamentations 3:23.

2 A word used to express an idea which is not meant literally.

3 Shulchan Arukh Orach Chaim 61:2, based on Sifre Va-Etchanan Piska 8.

4 Literally, not for the sake of heaven.

5 See ‘Zohar’, Acharei 3:73a.

1 Here the Shells are reinterpreted by a Chasidic mystic as a product of the ‘false consciousness’ of man when performing a holy act.

1 Seep.28 n. 3.
2 Psalm 19:15.

1 Each soul has its roots in higher worlds, the highest level of which is its source.

2 The prophets and the mystics.

3 Psalm 119:18. The ‘singer’ is King David, the traditional author of Psalms.

4 Psalm 19:15.

5 Psalm 2:6.

1 Symbolizing *Chesed*, the *Sefirah* of Compassion.
2 Possibly a polemic against Christian belief.
3 Possibly a polemic against Islam.

1 The six *Sefirot* around *Tiferet*, representing the male aspect of the Godhead, as the *Shekhinah*, Divine Presence, represents the female aspect.

2 Symbolized in the sexual union of the male and female aspects of the divine.

3 Euphemistically symbolizing sexual union.

4 Deuteronomy 6:4, 'the Lord' and 'His Name' representing the *Sefirah Tiferet* and the *Shekhinah*, respectively.

5 Symbolizing the *Shekhinah*.

6 The forces of the Other Side at other times attempt to control the *Shekhinah*.

1 Through Israel's celebration of the Sabbath.
2 The extra Sabbath soul.
3 'TB', Sanhedrin 37a.
4 'Mishnah', Avot 4:2.
5 Literally, year.
6 Psalm 104:31.

1 Deuteronomy 18:9.
2 ‘TB’, Shabbat 75a.

1 The Council of Elders during the Second Temple period, to whom the formalization of the liturgy is ascribed.

2 The Hebrew language.

1 This is a goal of the Kabbalistic mystic, for it brings him closest to the absolute Nothingness of God.

1 Exodus 25:8.
2 Isaiah 24:23.

1 Psalm 147:2.
2 Exodus 15:17.

1 Cf. Deuteronomy 12:9.
2 Daniel 6:11.

1 i.e. that the evil forces be subdued.

2 The eve of Shavuot, which celebrates the revelation of the Torah.

3 i.e. the mystics.

4 The custom of staying up all night on the eve of *Shavuot* and studying Torah.

1 The mystic members of the Bride’s palace.

1 Literally, days.
2 Leviticus 23:2.
3 ‘TB’, Chulin 101b, and ‘TB’, Pesachim 117b respectively.

1 ‘Death’s door’ is, literally, ‘the gates of death’, and ‘changes his name’ literally, calls him by a changed name.

2 Ruth 4:17.

1 i.e. to cemeteries to pray.
2 Deuteronomy 18:11.
3 Gained Kabbalistic insight to the level of the *Sefirah Binah*.

1 Ecclesiastes 4:2.

2 By dying to this world for the spiritual life of the Torah.

3 Of Creation, Formation and Action. ‘Afterwards’ is after his death.

4 i.e. his disciples.

1 ‘Zohar’ 3:71b.
2 i.e. the departed ‘righteous man’.
3 With evil thoughts, etc.

1 Genesis 49:33.
2 Genesis 23:2.
3 See ‘Midrash Genesis Rabbah’ 47:6.
4 i.e. to the three Patriarchs.

1 Since they needed to be the four in the divine chariot and couldn’t wait for David.

1 His name is given here.
2 Isaiah 33:7.
3 ‘TB’, Nedarim 32a.

1 ‘Zohar’ 3:169a; 170a.

1 Deuteronomy 24:16.
2 Exodus 20:5.
3 Medieval work outlining the punishment of the soul after death.

1 Exodus 33:20.
2 Literally, stiffens his neck.
3 See ‘TB’, Eruvin 19a.
4 At the moment of death.

1 Genesis 1:27.
2 A kind of astral body.
3 i.e. man’s image, not God’s image as this is usually translated.
4 Psalm 39:7.

1 i.e. my unconsciousness.
2 Towards the end of the weekday Amidah prayer.
3 Psalm 39:7.
4 Isaiah 51:16.

1 Isaiah 6:3; this can also, with Midrashic licence, be read as ‘His glory is not from any part of the world.’

2 Job 28:12; a Midrashic reinterpretation of the original, which literally meant ‘From where can one find wisdom?’

1 *Kabbalah* is literally ‘received’.
2 Philosophy.

1 ‘Zohar Chadash’ 89a, Midrash Ruth Ha-Neelam.

1 Exodus 21:3; referring to a Hebrew slave.

2 From a previous incarnation.

3 Giving birth to children.

4 Exodus 21:3: ‘If he is married, then his wife will go out with him.’

5 Which happens to a man who in a previous life did not marry and thus does not have a pre-arranged partner.

6 To have children.

1 The service of God.

2 Exodus 21:3; referring to the wife of a Hebrew slave.

3 ‘Zohar’ 2:106a, wives reincarnate so that they can marry their husbands once again in the next life if they have not had children during their current marriage.

1 To be able to fulfil it in the next life.
2 Each soul has a root in the upper worlds.
3 Known as the Day of Judgement for man's sins.
4 Literally, bringing to life of the dead.

1 Literally, falling sickness.

1 i.e. it has reincarnated into it.
2 Literally, is found with him in his own time and life.

1 1 Samuel 18:1.

1 Their sins have brought them down to the level of animals.
2 Habakkuk 2:11.

1 In his previous life.

2 Female potencies in the *Sefirotic* structure which aid the process of unification of male and female.

3 Leviticus 12:1.

1 Before the mother could become pregnant again.

2 Which originally impregnated the woman, and was then reincarnated into her daughter.

3 Literally, sweeten.

4 The punishment for the soul is to be reincarnated in an animal.

1 Literally, comes out into the atmosphere of the world.
2 Literally, a man.
3 Literally, did not come into its hand.

1 ‘TB’, Shabbat 33b.

1 The veil which divides the human and the divine worlds.
2 By their twittering.

1 The grafting together of hybrids of different kinds of plants is forbidden in the Bible, see Leviticus 19:19.

1 A kosher animal that could be offered up as a sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple.

2 ‘TB’, Sanhedrin 73a.

3 A non-kosher animal.

1 i.e. like water they have reincarnated souls in them.

2 Literally, ‘we do not have to suspect’ that reincarnated souls will enter a person.

3 ‘Mishnah’, Avot 4:9.

1 It was believed that the rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, known as the *even shetiyah*, the ‘foundation stone’, was this rock over the abyss around which the whole world was built.

1 Literally, dust.

1 In the original, ‘them’.

1 Literally, dough of impurity.

1 Of this external dimension.

1 Literally, ‘estimates in his heart’. In the next sentence, ‘grasp’ is literally ‘estimate’ and ‘imagination’ is ‘heart’.

2 Genesis 1:31, which refers to how the world appears to God at the end of the creation story.

1 Literally, accuses.
2 The Evil Inclination, as is the ‘he’ in the next sentence.

1 Literally, service of the heart.

1 Genesis 5:1.
2 Job 37:7.

1 In the pre-natal heavenly world.

2 The place where the Powers of Evil dwell.

3 As explained in ‘Zohar’ 3:61b, Acharei Mot and ‘Zohar’, Shir Hashirim, ‘Zohar Chadash’ 84.

4 Before birth.

1 Genesis 3:21.
2 Proverbs 20:9.

1 Isaiah 29:13.

2 The Hebrew for Sabbath *Shabbat* can also be read as *shavta*, ‘return’, associated with the word for repentance *teshuvah* also meaning ‘return’.

3 Deuteronomy 30:2, ‘return’ is *ve-shavta*.

4 Jeremiah 31:34.

1 Literally, ‘we will do and we will listen’ (Exodus 24:7), the response of the Israelites to the revelation at Sinai.

2 ‘TB’, Avodah Zarah 4a, concerning King David’s sin with Bath Sheba and Israel’s sin with the Golden Calf. These incidents teach that if an individual sinned, one can say to him, ‘Take an example from an individual like King David who repented,’ and if a whole community sins, then one can say to them, ‘Take an example from the community of Israel who sinned with the Golden Calf and repented.’

3 Jeremiah 50:20. The text has ‘On that day’ (for ‘In those days’), which is an erroneous quotation.

4 See ‘TB’, Yoma 86b.

1 There is a tradition, recorded in ‘Mishnah’, Taanit *6:6,* that Apostomos burnt the Torah in the Holy Land in the early centuries CE. The exact identity of Apostomos is unknown.

2 i.e. the language of animals.

1 Literally, go out.
2 Deuteronomy 21:10-11.
3 Literally, an Aramean woman.

1 Numbers 25:7-8; Zimri, an Israelite man, and Cozbi, a Midianite woman, were killed by Phinehas when caught in the sexual act.

2 Literally, taken from him.

1 Genesis 38; Judah had sexual relations with his daughter-in-law Tamar thinking she was a prostitute.

2 Therefore, Zimri was responsible for his sinful act.

3 Literally, eyes.

4 If God knows what we are going to do, then we are not free to choose some other course of action. On the other hand if we are genuinely free, then God cannot know in advance what we will do.

1 Literally, light.

2 Leviticus 16:10. Azazel is a desert spirit, and sending the goat bearing the sins of Israel to him is like making an offering to powers of evil, an act normally prohibited as idolatrous.

3 Midrash Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 46 and Nachmanides' commentary on Leviticus 16:8, respectively.

4 'Midrash Genesis Rabbah' 9:3.

1 ‘Midrash Yalkut Shimoni’, Isaiah 26 remez 429: ‘It says [in Psalm 132:9] “Let Your pious ones shout for joy.” - This refers to the wicked ones of Israel who are called “pious ones”… When they enter the gate of the Garden of Eden the angels Michael and Gabriel enter first. They seek the advice of the Holy One. The Holy One replies to the angels and says: “Leave them be and let them enter and see My Glory.” ’

2 Proverbs 3:6.

3 On Psalm 144.

4 Another name for the Divine Presence.

1 ‘TB’, Berakhot 63a.
2 Literally, puts it upon his heart.
3 Leviticus 25:17.
4 Leviticus 19:18.
5 Literally, have merit.

1 Micah 7:19.
2 Literally, to learn merit for him.
3 That seems like a sin.

1 For the Lubliner, see p. 211 n. 2, and for Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhansk, see p. 39 n. 1.

2 The prohibition on being secluded with a member of the opposite sex.

1 A kind of astral body, *tzelem* is the image of the divine in which a person is created, and it hovers over the parents when a child is conceived; see ‘Zohar’ 3:104.

2 Isaiah 25:8, and cf. Psalm 37:20.

1 Exodus 34:7, this is the literal meaning, but it actually means ‘forgives sin’.

2 Genesis 4:13, this is the literal meaning, but it actually means ‘too great to bear’, said by Cain.

1 Of the *Sitra Achra*.

2 According to Rabbinic legend, Balaam, a Gentile prophet (Numbers 22), tried to escape punishment by flying up into the air but was brought down to earth by magical means and eventually killed by a sword engraved on both sides with a serpent.

1 The side of evil.
2 i.e. while it is still dark or by moonlight.
3 Aspects of a person’s astral body.

1 They were created before twilight on Friday evening, and there wasn't time for their completion before the onset of the Sabbath.

2 The Holy Name of God can thus be used as protection against demons and to scare them away.

1 Psalm 91, recited in the liturgy for Saturday nights and at funerals.

2 2 Samuel 7:14, usually translated as ‘the plagues of the children of men’.

1 The three are, respectively, Aramaic *matronita*, the highest level of femininity, represented by the *Sefirah Malkhut* in the World of Emanation; Hebrew *amah*, a lower level of femininity, represented by a lower aspect of the *Sefirah Malkhut* in the World of Creation; and Hebrew *shifchah*, the lowest level of femininity, represented by the *Sefirah Malkhut* in the World of Action.

2 The same letters as the word for demon, *shed*, with the addition of the letter *yod*.

3 Isaiah 6:3.

4 The *gematriya* of both names being 314.

5 i.e. transformed into angels.

1 Deuteronomy 27:21.
2 Literally, grandmother.

1 Back to back.

2 Kftzfoni and Mhitbl (below) are the names of demons. Hebrew is a consonantal language and there is no certainty about what vowels to put in the names – and they may well be acronyms.

3 In the *mezuzah* parchment attached to the door.

4 Psalm 91:10.

1 Created in the image of God.

2 In the original, ‘spirits’. Their names are SNWY, SNSNWY and SMNGLF, and in some texts they are involved with controlling Lilith.

1 Leviticus 11:44.

2 Genesis 4:22, nothing further is mentioned about her in the Bible.

3 Literally, ‘sons of God’; cf. Genesis 6:4.

1 Three female demon leaders.
2 Zechariah 13:2.

1 Genesis 1:24.

2 Male and female.

3 Genesis 2:7.

4 Both male and female.

5 Isaiah 34:14, Isaiah's prophecy against Edom in the future, Edom being identified by the Rabbis with Rome.

1 According to ‘Derekh Emet’: ‘She who… sheet is present’ means ‘She is present to enter with her sheet to oppress the seminal drops’; ‘Fly away, fly away’ is to be interpreted as ‘Release, release’, meaning ‘release your wrapping and binding’; ‘do not come… away’ means do not take the souls outside to make them into demons; ‘they are not yours,… servants’ means they belong to the side of holiness and you do not have the power to oppress these souls.

1 Exodus 23:13.

1 In the original *‘el Diablo’*.
2 A general name for female demons, called after Lilith.

1 A biblical tribe that attacked the Israelites and became a paradigm of the power of evil in the world, see Exodus 17; Deuteronomy 25.

2 Genesis 32:25.

3 Psalm 91:11.

1 ‘TB’, Berakhot 61b.

2 The world of evil made from the dross and waste matter of holiness.

3 ‘Midrash Tanchuma’ Korach.

1 Exodus 31:16.

2 A play on word *DoRoTam*, which means ‘their generations’: the consonants can be read as *DiRaTam*, meaning ‘their dwelling places’.

3 Song of Songs 8:6.

1 See ‘TB’, Baba Batra 16a.

2 All are part of the tree of the *Sefirot*: fruit is *Chokhmah*, branches *Binah*, roots *Malkhut* and ‘the tree itself’ is the lower group of *Sefirot* representing the trunk.

3 See ‘TB’, Berakhot 32b.

4 Genesis 3:22.

5 Genesis 2:17.

1 ‘Zohar’ 2:165a, Terumah. See p. 276.

1 Here the Serpent is identified with the Evil Inclination (*Yetzer Hara*) in man.

1 Isaiah 62:23.
2 Zechariah 13:9.

1 When the Assyrians captured the northern state of Israel in 721 bce.

1 Exodus 15:25; this refers to an incident in the wilderness, after the Exodus, when the Children of Israel had no water for three days until they came to the bitter waters of Marah. Moses was able to make those waters drinkable by throwing a certain tree into them.

2 Often referred to as ‘a tree of life’ in Rabbinic sources.

3 At the dawning of the Messianic age.

4 Exodus 15:25. The ‘masters of the Mishnah’ are the Sages behind the first work of the Oral Torah.

5 Exodus 1:13.

6 ‘mortar’ is *chomer* and logical arguments are called *kal va-chomer*.

1 ‘Bricks’ are *levenim*, from a root, LBN, meaning ‘white’, presumably because of the white clay used making bricks, and ‘clarification of the Law’ is *libun halakhah*, literally meaning ‘the whitening of the law’, where ‘whitening’ is done by a heat-clarification process.

2 Literally meaning ‘outside’, texts which were not included in the ‘Mishnah’, but often quoted in Rabbinic sources. The association with ‘service in the field’ is because fields are also ‘outside’ the living area of people.

3 A Messianic figure modelled on the prophet Moses.

1 Deuteronomy 4:24.

2 The Divine Presence is essentially feminine.

3 This voluntary exile of the Divine Presence among the evil Shells is to help the trapped souls extricate themselves from their own exile there.

4 The lowest level.

5 Psalm 68:35.

6 Deuteronomy 32:18.

7 Isaiah 25:8.

1 Psalm 2:7.

1 Rebbe Israel Hopstein of Kozienice (1746–1815), an early Chasidic leader.

2 Two nations that will attack Israel in the End of Days: see Ezekiel 38–9.

3 Zephaniah 3:9.

1 Psalm 69:19.

2 i.e. 1746.

3 A magical oath using divine or angelic names to conjure up and control spiritual beings who guard the levels through which the soul must ascend.

4 Literally, from the day that I stood on my mind.

5 Literally, mouth to mouth.

1 Cf. Ezekiel 1:14.

2 Literally ‘too heavy in hearing’; cf. Isaiah 59:1.

3 Cf. Psalm 69:14.

4 Literally, ‘strange deaths’. There were massacres and forced conversions of Jews by bands of Ukrainian peasants, known as Haidamaks, in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

5 Literally, ‘handed over my soul’, i.e. risked my life.

6 Ahijah the Shilonite (according to Jacob Joseph, in ‘Toldot Yaakov Yosef’, p. 156), was regarded as a model type of preacher and moral instructor. Jewish lore tells how Ahijah was a student of Moses, took part in the Exodus from Egypt, was a judge in the Law Court of King David, prophesied the split in the kingdom during the reign of Solomon and was the teacher of the prophet Elijah and of the Besht.

7 Literally, I was on my position.

1 Based on the verse in Micah 5:4: ‘When the Assyrian will come into our land, and when he will tread in our palaces, then we will raise up against him seven shepherds.’ The Talmud (‘TB’, Sukkah 52b) lists the biblical character King David surrounded by Adam, Seth, Methuselah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses, as the Seven Shepherds.

2 Literally, because of my departure from this world.

3 Spiritual acts uniting all aspects of God.

4 Based on Proverbs 5:16.

5 For use in the journey of the soul to heaven, or in Kabbalistic white magic.

6 Literally, men of my age.

1 Things in heaven.

1 Exodus 33:20.
2 Literally, doubled and redoubled.

1 Isaiah 60:19.
2 Exodus 20:15.
3 ‘TB’, Shabbat 88b.

1 Of worshipping the Golden Calf, see Exodus 32.
2 Isaiah 60:3.

1 Who was about to die.

1 Of male and female aspects of the divine.
2 Seep.10 n. 2.

1 Cf. Isaiah 2:4.
2 Leviticus 26:6.